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WILLIAM INGLIS MORSE
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A Woman of Culture

A CANADIAN ROMANCE

BY

JOHN TALBOT SMITH

AUTHOR OF

“BROTHER AZARIAS,” “SOLITARY ISLAND,”
“HIS HONOR THE MAYOR,” “SARANAC,” ETC.

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A WOMAN OF CULTURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

Towards the close of a certain day in January, some years removed from the present date of writing, a snow-storm was taking place in a Canadian city of note and position in its own country, but little known, save among the mercantile community, in the United States. The storm was one of the old-fashioned kind, when the flakes fell softly and thickly, and thought not of stopping for two days at least ; when you could not see to any noticeable distance through the feathery veil, and enjoyed many surprising encounters in consequence ; when the air rang with the music of invisible bells and human voices, and when every pleasure-loving heart was bright with the confidence of a month's uninterrupted sleighing. Those were the good old times celebrated in story and in song. Nature's generosity in the shape of a snowy, blowy, freezing winter was equalled only by the generous manner in which the Canadians celebrated its coming. In that city the winter has become a memory of the past, and so many changes have occurred in other respects as to make the period of which we

write seem tinged with the romance of a century's distance. Then the woods ran close to the city limits, and occasionally, in spite of aldermanic fiats, still held with their rearguard some of the most popular thoroughfares. Now the virgin forest has fled northward, and only a rim of venerable trees ornaments the surrounding hills, the memorial of decayed glory, and a reproach to the civilization which banished so much of beauty.

The forest had been the guardian of the snow and the rain, and the friend of the rivers. Now the rivers run thin and tremulous to the lakes, shrunk into half their earlier size and deprived of all their loveliness; and the grand-children of those who looked then with sparkling eyes and beating hearts on the piling snow, or drove day after day in the long winter season through the drifts to the tintinnabulation of the bells—those grand-children, I say, now wait hopefully and patiently for a storm which will give them one hour of pleasant sleighing, and many days of slushy, muddy discontent on the four wheels of a brougham. It was a city of simple, homely pleasures in the main, and these abounded to the fullest extent. Nature, like the people, was generous in her giving. In summer there was rain in abundance and cool, dry days; in winter the cold fairly sparkled, and the snow fell as it is falling this moment when the story begins, in showers that left marble appearances as common as in the days of the Roman fame.

It had been snowing for two days, and already the first indications of the clearing up of the storm were becoming apparent in the increasing volume of sleigh-bell music; in the rout and roar of the school-children whom careful mammas had kept within doors for forty-eight terrible hours; but more than all in the

broad banners of light that waved across the snowfall from the west, where the sun was struggling, and not vainly, to throw his strongest winter light on the snow-bound land and the frozen waters of the lake. Forms were becoming more distinct, sudden encounters less numerous, and foot passengers, although they had severe struggles in the snow-drifts, more venturesome. In those streets where wealth and respectability dwelt, ladies in furs, coachmen in liveries, and gentlemen in greatcoats were coming and going to and from every mansion, so eager were all to greet one another after a long imprisonment of two days. Oh the cheerful, smiling young faces that shone on every side with a brightness which their hearts had stolen from the returned sun! And the blessed old faces pressed against the windows to see the younger ones departing, with the memories of an earlier and a similar time to light up the wrinkles and the fast-dulling eyes! What a sight it was even to the indifferent looker-on! The greetings that were exchanged loud and ringing as the greetings of their own sleigh-bells! The pretty cries from the young ladies, and the manly tones of assurance that answered them!

Up and down through the long thoroughfares went the sleighs, a winter mosaic of colored robes and silvered harness and sparkling eyes, crossing and recrossing the same streets, darting into side avenues and appearing again on the fashionable way, turning at times countrywards for a spin on the open roadway, and occasionally moving snail like through a retired quarter, where nothing had escaped the mould of shabby gentility save undying love. But at one of the most favored points an awkward blockade occurred. It was a wide avenue leading straight to the lake, and bordered just now by the skele-

tons of trees. The stateliest houses of that time here had their foundations, and the bluest-blooded of the city here sheltered their stately exclusiveness. On every gate gleamed a silvered inscription, and at every curb was a polished and carved footstone for the horsewomen of the house—for riding was an accomplishment of those days, much as it is now neglected. The blockade was extensive, and began in front of a building whose roomy grounds and numerous towers bespoke unusual wealth for the proprietor. Sleighs were constantly arriving to swell the throng already gathered, and, as the dwelling stood at the intersection of two streets, a goodly crowd of vehicles was soon ranged northward and westward on the avenues.

The occupants stood on tiptoe of expectation. In the countenances of some not a little alarm was expressed, for a little flame had crept from one of the chimneys of the stately dwelling, and was pushing its deft fingers along a part of the roof quite free from snow. The peril was not immediate. Moreover, the servants had come to the rescue, and a sturdy fellow was crawling on hands and knees to the spot of danger.

A little relieved from suspense, the silence of the crowd was soon changed into a murmur, and shortly the readier and more forward began to indulge their wit at the expense of their neighbors. Then the laugh followed, hilarity communicated itself with lightning speed to the whole assemblage, and it became clear that as the danger to the dwelling diminished the necessity of a speedy separation became more urgent. Some of the sleighs began to feel their way through the multitude—a proceeding which gave great offense to the majority, and brought down

showers of sarcasm and biting repartee, not always of the most refined sort, upon the occupants. Others, not caring to risk receiving the same attentions, waited in silence and patience for escape from the situation, but showed plainly their distress and disgust. Prominent among these was a gentleman in the rear of the crowd, yet not far enough back to retreat in the direction whence he came. His turn-out was stylish and rich, but so subdued in its trappings as to attract more attention and envy from its taste and refinement than from its richness.

His companion, who held the reins, had a peculiar appearance. The narrowness of his head and face, the Roman prominence of his nose, the backward curve of his forehead, and the surprising length of his neck gave him the air of a wise old bird. His eyes were deep-set, brilliant, and hard in expression, and his hair, dark and thick, hung straight as an Indian's over his neck.

When the front rank of the blockade had broken he turned his sleigh into the drive of those grounds where stood the mansion so lately threatened with destruction. Another sleigh had driven to the door, and as the doctor—for of the medical profession this gentleman turned out to be—alighted and came slowly up the steps its late occupant disappeared within the house.

Within the lamps had just been lighted, and their soft brilliancy fell upon the panelled walls and rich adornments of the rooms with an effect that took the eye of the physician mightily, although he had seen it all many times. Everything was in perfect taste, and in keeping with the wealth and social position of the man whose good fortune it was to hold the highest business reputation in the city. Doctor Killany

looked around him with the air of one accustomed to live and move among such luxuries, and he seemed more absorbed in the impatience of waiting than in actual observation of the costly comforts under his eye. Yet at that moment no picture could have been more distinct in the doctor's mind than that of the miserable, dingy bachelor rooms—miserable and dingy for his tastes and ambition, wretched by comparison with all this magnificence—which his income could with difficulty support in their tawdry grandeur. The doctor was a handsome man, not extraordinarily good-looking, but with the personal beauty which regular features, fine teeth, bright eyes, a good figure, and a polished manner can give to ordinary mortals. His complexion was too uniformly pale to please, and a certain pinched expression of some of the features gave a rather sinister touch to his countenance. The eyes shifted too often from one object to another. The mouth had about it the faintest suspicion of cruelty, and in his moments of meditation his brow fell to glowering. His head was intellectual in shape and size, and rested proudly on his shoulders, but the jaw was too massive to make the effect complete, whatever firmness it gave to his expression. Standing under the glare of the lamps, Doctor Killany appeared no ordinary personage. No one would forget to take a second glance at his pale face and elegant form, wondering, perhaps, that one so favored by nature should be so little favored by grace.

The servant came shortly to usher him into the library, where Mr. McDonnell awaited him.

The merchant sat in his easy-chair, near the grate, his face partly hidden by a newspaper, which he did not lay aside at the entrance of his visitor. He was an old man, if judged by the whiteness of his hair and



the wrinkles of his face. Care and weariness were its prevailing expression, and these qualities seemed to deepen and broaden when Doctor Killany had entered, and, walking to the mantel, stood with one arm upon the marble shelf in an attitude of familiarity. He was smiling down upon the white-haired gentleman, who, without removing his eyes from the paper, contrived to say:

“Will you not be seated, doctor? I suppose you are to stay for dinner.”

“Thank you,” the doctor answered, “but my stay must be rather short. If you could give me your attention for a few moments I would be deeply grateful.”

The slightest shade of annoyance passed over McDonell’s face as he answered:

“It is not of so much value, sir, that your gratitude should at all be aroused. Do sit down.”

“Thank you again,” said the doctor smoothly; “but please excuse me. I must feel grateful—extremely so. The minutes of a business man, I have heard, represent so many dollars.”

“In business hours, perhaps, but not now, not now,” returned the other, with impatience.

Doctor Killany drummed the mantel with his fingers for a few moments, and stared at the opposite wall. “You had a narrow escape a short time ago. I saw it from the street; the roof was blazing prettily, and the avenues were blockaded.”

“It might have been an awkward thing for us,” McDonell said, “if the engines of the fire department had become necessary.”

“So I thought. Miss Nano was in one avenue and I in the other. Neither was able to approach. Imagine our sensations.”

"They must have been painful," said McDonell, with an amused smile.

"Indeed, indeed they were; but, pardon my abruptness, have come to speak of your daughter."

The older gentleman put aside his paper at this, folded his hands, and looked into the doctor's shifting eyes so long as they remained fastened on him. It was an attitude of defiance.

"I allow you," he said, with a blandness which did not quite conceal the peremptoriness of his tones, "to associate with Nano, to dine with her, to ride with her. I trust you have not the impudence to desire any closer relations."

"To be plain with you, I have cherished such desires," said the doctor humbly, "but subject both to your permission and to Miss Nano's in their expression. I am not a susceptible man, but your daughter's intellect, beauty, and—"

"Her wealth and position," broke in the other.

"Her wealth and position," continued Killany, undisturbed, "were a combination of good qualities which neither my heart—"

"Nor your interest."

"Nor my interest, if you will so have it, could easily pass over; and being once prisoner so favorably, you may be sure I am not anxious to escape from my chains."

"Not while the chains are golden, I'll be bound," laughed McDonell. "But you will never have from me—"

"I beg of you, sir," interrupted the doctor, with a warning gesture, "for your own sake not to make any declarations which it may pain you to retract before I leave."

His manner was gentle and smooth as usual, but contained a threat in its very smoothness.

"Your confidence would be amusing," said McDonell, growing a shade paler, "if the matter were less serious or our relations other than they are."

But he did not continue his interrupted speech.

"Precisely," the doctor murmured; "and it is on the strength of these relations that I stand before you to-night. As a distant relative of the rich merchant I might have held a precarious social position in this city and country; but as a poor professional I would not have dared to look up to the heiress with the boldness I at present assume. You see I am frank."

"It is one of your shining qualities," the merchant answered. "Yet, if you would deign to receive a little advice from me, do not presume too much on this secret matter. Poverty is a great misfortune, but not the greatest, and I would suffer it in preference to many things. Besides, it has often occurred to me that restitution might as well be made now to those I have wronged as when I am on my death-bed. It must be made in any event."

"Are there any to whom you could make it?" asked the doctor, with careless but cunning indifference.

"That is not to the point," the merchant replied, resting his head heavily on his hand; "if they do not live it goes to the poor."

"Have you thought of your daughter in this?"

McDonell raised himself haughtily, and threw an angry glance at the doctor.

"I understand you," he said coldly. "But Nano will not fail to follow her father into poverty, if it be necessary."

"And so to live after him?" questioned Killany, with the slightest suspicion of a sneer in his smiling

face. "You do not know your daughter, Mr. McDonell. In spite of her philosophical pursuits, which she pretends teach her to despise everything; in spite of the careful education you have given her at the hands of strangers, Miss Nano has a high appreciation of the advantages of wealth. She has no religion. In fact, she despises all religions. I believe that, if it were required, she would, as Christians say, peril her soul to retain this wealth."

McDonell stood up, his face as white as the marble mantel, his breathing coming in short, quick gasps.

"You lie!" he whispered, "you lie!"

The doctor smiled at his anger and earnestness. The agony of the father found no sympathy in his heart. An atheist himself, he could not see in the principles which it pleased Miss Nano to profess anything inconsistent with the ordinary standard of virtue. He said nothing in answer to the intensely bitter and insulting words of McDonell, but busied himself with the papers, while the merchant, bowing his head upon the mantel, endeavored to recover from the anguish which swept over his soul. During the silence that intervened neither saw the face which for a moment looked in through the partly open door, and was reflected in the mirrors opposite. When the gentlemen resumed their conversation it was gone.

"Tell me why you have come here to night," said McDonell, composedly taking his seat. "What more do you ask for?"

"The smallest of favors," said Killany; "and I have never been exacting, considering what I know."

"Considering what you know," returned the other sharply, "it was polite to have asked but little."

"Is it nothing," said the doctor, angered by the old man's tone out of his own calmness, "to know that the wealthy and stainless citizen, connected with the best families of the province, and a rising power in the political world, is, if justice were done, not much better than a pauper and the basest of criminals?"

"Proof, proof, sir!" cried the merchant.

"There I am weak," the doctor acknowledged. "I cannot drag you before the public tribunals, I cannot blast your name with actual disgrace. But society, the world, is exacting. A word, and your name is indelibly stained. Before the world's courts you will stand a criminal, tried and condemned, and moreover, there will be no appeal. Do you care to risk that?"

"For Nano's sake, no," McDonell said; "and yet, as I have said of poverty, it is a great misfortune, but there are misfortunes still greater."

"To return to the object of this interview," said Killany—"and, I pray, leave off your silly inuendoes—I want your permission to woo your daughter honorably. It shall be in her power to reject me. I do not ask your influence—no, not even your neutrality. From me she shall never hear of the unfortunate relations that exist between us, and if you choose to leave her penniless at your death-hour it shall make no difference for me. Can anything be fairer? Could you desire more in the wealthiest son-in-law?"

"Nothing more," McDonell answered carelessly. "I accept your conditions, and, further, there shall be no interference on my part. You have told me that I do not know my daughter. In the respects you have mentioned I do not, and trust that those deformities of character may be as wanting in her as they are glaring in you. But this I do know," and a smile of

loving, fatherly confidence lighted up for a moment the gentleman's haggard face, "she will never marry you. Oh! you may exercise ingenuity, but she will never marry you."

"I take all risks," the doctor said gaily. "Faint heart never won fair lady. Behold me in a twelve-month your honored son-in-law."

"I shall bid you good-evening," the merchant said wearily. "You have obtained your request. I would say, may you regret the hour when you first asked it, but that I am sure you will."

"Good-evening, sir," the doctor coolly responded. "I would also say, may you regret the hour in which you first granted it, but that I am sure you will. Your servant, sir."

And he bowed himself, smiling and triumphant, out of the room. For some moments Mr. McDonell remained in his drooping posture at the table. Then he rose and surveyed his face at the glass.

"It must have been truth," he said with a sigh, "or it never would have struck home so keenly. O my child! my child! Through you God will punish me for my desertion of the orphans, for my desertion of the faith he gave to me and my fathers, for my love of power and wealth; above all, my child, that I did not bestow on you, motherless, the care and love that was your right. I must suffer doubly in your sufferings and my own. O my God!" and he clasped his hands in agony, "let me bear all! The wronged shall be righted; I shall repent through all my remaining years; but spare, oh! spare my child."

CHAPTER II.

WRECKED.

The darkness of night had come on during the interview between the doctor and McDonell, and in all the rooms of the mansion the lamps had been lighted and the last ray of daylight shut out by the closing of shutters and curtains. In all the rooms save one. On the second floor the apartments of the lady of the house were situated—elegant chambers, where wealth and art had joined hands to make everything beautiful. Here were no lights. The curtains were still up and the blinds open. Only the cold light of stars shone through the window, and a soft gloom rested like a veil on the dimmed outlines of statues and busts and stately furniture.

On a low ottoman the lady of the mansion was seated. She was looking up towards the dark sky with her hands clasped on her knee, motionless as her own statues, and more beautiful even in that twilight, which was strong enough to light up the lines of a fair, classic face and be reflected from large, soul-filled eyes. She had sat there just as she was sitting now since that moment when her ears had heard the scornful words of Dr. Killany to her father, and, looking into the library, she had caught a glimpse of a tableau which for an instant sent a spasm of pain through her form. She was thinking over the sneering sentences, and trying in a feeble way to feel angry at the indignant, passionate, agonized denial her father

had made. She was wondering, too, at the attitude of humiliation he seemed to hold towards Killany, whose manner, though respectful, seemed flippant, and even impudent, in the presence of agony so keen. And between the two meditations she was confused, vexed and restless.

The principles which Killany had represented her as holding were those to which she had given utterance many times, and had spoken of proudly as the true basis of life's enjoyment and usefulness, perhaps even of its truth. For some reason she was annoyed at finding they belonged to her; whether from the scornful manner in which Killany had mentioned them, or from a conviction that, when stripped of glamor and stated in plain English, their beauty and solidity were not so apparent, she could hardly tell. Perhaps it was not so much from either of these causes her annoyance proceeded as from the impression which her father's bitter indignation and grief had made. In the circle of her friends such declarations as these were received with applause and admiration, quoted again and again, and were called the free expressions of a mind liberated from the slavery of custom and superstition. Yet here was a man, not at all given to piety, and totally averse in his outward actions to the superstitions of creeds, who, at mention of the fact that his child professed such doctrines, must needs act as if a serpent had risen in his path, and stretch out his hands and roll his eyes in horror, and insult the person who gave the information. And this man was her father. He, who had never shown to her one tenth part of a father's care and affection, found his paternal heart racked and torn as it would not be if she lay dead in the stately house. She thought of this confusedly, and was a long

time in clearing away the mental fog in which it involved her. She went over aloud, one by one, the assertions of Killany, in order by this means to discover what in his language could reasonably cause her annoyance and her father pain.

“‘She has a high appreciation of the advantages of wealth,’ he asserted. And what is there in the world,” she said, with her eyes still fixed on the patch of sky, “which has a more powerful influence? Virtue is supposed to be the only power able to cope with it, and yet virtue has a price and can be bought for gold. They who have it not would give their honesty to obtain it. They who have it would peril all to retain it. Love and hatred are its handmaids, and the passions generally bow before it. To be rich is to be divine; Croesus was a god. If there were any meaning in these creeds, if their hereafter were but a certainty, one could afford to smile at the ups and downs of fortune.

“‘She has no religion—in fact, despises all creeds,’ he said. And is it not true? And if true, what reproach is it for me? The mummeries of Romanists and the quarrellings of Protestants—what have they which can allure any but the most ignorant minds or the most bewitched? I have no religion, if to despise the world’s superstitions be that; but my heart is human, the love of my race is my religion—the religion of humanity, of culture, of refinement.

“‘I would peril my soul to retain this wealth.’ There he was wrong. I have no soul in the sense which is theirs—a part of me which is to live in eternity, and as it has lived in time, to suffer or rejoice when time is ended. *That* the soundest intellects look upon as a myth. I peril nothing, for I have nothing to peril. But oh! if it were true beyond

dispute that I had an immortal soul, what would I care for wealth or honors? Is there a God? Christians and I say yes. Are we accountable to that Being for all our actions? Christians and I say yes again. We differ only as to His personality. Their God is an impossibility, beautiful but unapproachable. Mine is a reality which begins and ends in time—myself. Why should I feel annoyed at hearing truths uttered? The doctor knows too much; and yet not too much, for all that he said I have many times repeated before my friends. My father is more childish on these points than could be supposed in one so indifferent. I have no God, no religion, in the bad sense which moderns have given these words. I love wealth and power, and despise and dread poverty and weakness. What if ever they should claim me, who detest them so much?"

She allowed her head to sink low on her breast and said no more. Later the servant entered quietly and lighted the lamps in the rooms. She rose then and stood before the mirror, as her father had done a few moments before in the painful solitude of the library. The face and form reflected there, in spite of the suspicion of care that rested on the brow, were beautiful, and she smiled her approbation.

"Let them speak of you as they may," she said, "let them think of you meanly or kindly, you have that which will subdue the fiercest of them. And yet, poor figure! you have no stability. You want a soul. Your beauty will fade and crumble through disgusting rottenness into dust. There should be an immortal part of you to preserve that which is so frail yet beautiful. Would that this much of Christian superstition had some truth! If I had been educated differently perhaps—"

She broke off abruptly, seated herself on the ottoman, and gave herself once more to thought. Her last words were the keynote to her meditations. She was reviewing her past life, its successive steps, and the scenes of her youth and girlhood rose up before her with the painful distinctness which belongs to sorrowful memories.

The grave expression that rested on her face, the melancholy that often lurked in her eyes when the gayety or excitement of a moment had passed, were indications of a nature which at some time during its formation had suffered, perhaps insensibly, yet severely. Her mother had died in her infancy. To the child it was not a great loss, for the merchant's wife was as shallow a creature as ever breathed, spending her days in foolish intrigues to prevent her husband from returning to the "superstitions which he had rejected," and to induce him to attend the High-Church worship. Her ideas of fulfilling the offices of wife and mother went no farther than the bearing of children and the hiring of nurses, the mere animal instinct of caring for the young being absent from her nature, and the higher notions concerning the duties of a Christian mother utterly undeveloped. Her daughter would have found in her a hindrance rather than a guide. Miss Nano was therefore ushered into the world under severe conditions. Her father had deserted his faith to obtain his present position of influence, and though his hair had grown prematurely white through remorse, yet to retain that position he had not scrupled to use fraud, and he had resolutely turned his back to the church which his heart sighed for and his reason acknowledged. He was indifferent to Nano. Business cares were of more importance to him than the care of the little child

who was to inherit his property. Nurses and governesses were supplied at proper intervals, and the boarding school received her when she had thrown aside her pinafores and taken to forbidden books and unlimited candy. She had been a trial to every one with whom she had come in contact. Her proud, violent, untaught nature burst forth regularly in childish rebellions, too serious in their consequences to governesses to make these indulgent ladies bring the case before the proper authority, her father. They coaxed and wheedled while Miss Nano tyrannized. She had a passion for books, and read everything from the histories of Prescott down to the *New York Ledger*, then in its infancy; refused imperiously to study the catechism or learn her prayers; laughed at the idea of a bad place or a devil; and went to the fashionable church under protest and through fear of her father.

He was not distant with her nor unkind. They chatted occasionally at the table. She made him little presents, which found their way to a waste-basket as regularly as received, but on her finding some of them in an ash-heap she put an end to these little tokens of a child's tender love. Sometimes she sat on his knee or drove out with him in the state carriage; but his pre-occupation on these occasions, and his indifference to what she said or did, rendered her pleasure insipid, and often turned it into pain.

It did not require years of such behavior to separate them and to chill in her heart the lively affection she naturally felt towards him. But it remained for the boarding school to put the finishing touches to the work which ill-training and neglect had so well begun. The teachers of the institution to which she was sent were of the transcendental school, were great admirers

of Margaret Fuller and Emerson, and had each a master passion, in ministering to which they spent the greater part of their lives. All were disciples of culture, yet professed as much of Christianity as was consistent with their broad principles, and could satisfy the less visionary parents whose daughters were entrusted to their charge, and who required some show at least of the prevailing religion in the general make-up of the young ladies. In their philosophy Christianity meant culture, or the worship of the beautiful, the worship of mind as impressed on matter in the production of graceful statuary, solemn temples, fine paintings, musical compositions and startling books. According to their ideas they retained the cream of Christianity, leaving the skim milk to the various creeds, and they spoke and wrote of Catholic doctrines in a peculiar fashion. Beauty was their standard of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood.

It was Nano's misfortune to fall into the hands of these self-worshippers. There was no doubt of the plastic material existing in the half-wild, impulsive, talented creature, and it submitted to the moulding process with wonderful meekness. For three years she walked with them through such mazes of absurdity and learning as it never occurred to the greatest or most erratic of scholars and philosophers to tread. The poetry and philosophy, the antiquities and religions, of all nations in all times were the objects of pretty investigation. The graduates could spout more mythology in an ordinary conversation than an Oxford professor, and all talked learnedly of the Zendavesta, of Confucius and his maxims, of the Aristotelian theories, of the Copernican system, and of the philosophy of the eighteenth century according to Cousin.

Three years in such an atmosphere for a girl of Nano's sort meant death. When her education was finished, and she returned to rule as mistress of her father's house, Nano was fairly enlisted in the ranks of atheism. "Strivings after the unattainable" were become quite as much the strong points in her character as they were in the characters of those with whom she had so long associated; and by degrees her nature underwent the revolting but expected change which the sentiments she has just uttered indicate.

After the last spoken words of the lady she remained for a long time in the same attitude of dejection and disturbed thought. The scenes of her life in the past were not pleasant memories. So deep and absorbing was her meditation that a gentle knock at the door, though twice repeated, passed unheeded. Even the opening of the door a moment later, and the entrance of a young, bright-looking lady in walking costume, were not enough to wake her from her reveries; and for a few moments the new-comer stood under the chandelier directly behind Nano, watching her bowed form reflected in the mirror. Then she stole forward, put her arms around Nano's neck and her lips to her cheek in a familiar but respectful way, saying:

"Always solitary, always thinking! Wrapped up in your contemplation of Hindoo deities or mythologies, Nano, when you should be getting into a pleasant excitement over the latest style of winter hats."

Nano looked up and caught the gentle hands in her own, all her moodiness vanishing in an instant.

"Little witch, you are as mysterious in your comings and goings as the Roman—"

The witch put one hand quickly over the lady's mouth.

"No, do not mention one of those heathen deities.

Have you not promised me? And I would as lief be compared to a monkey as to a heathen goddess."

"I did forget my promise," said Nano, "but for the first and last time. Yet I was not thinking of the goddesses when you came in, but of some very practical things which do not often occur to me, as you will easily believe. I had said aloud, just before you entered, what a terrible thing it would be to become poor."

"Not so very terrible," said the girl slowly and with such a serious face that Nano laughed.

"Let us talk of more cheerful things," she said. "Now that I am to lose my companion, our parting must be made in a merry mood. Life has so little of what is actually pleasant in it that it is not good to borrow trouble. Now tell me of that young prodigy, your brother the doctor. Has he opened his office yet, and have you made all your arrangements? Oh! what shall I do without my companion? Where shall I find such another as you?"

"You can purchase anything for gold," said Olivia slyly.

"Very true, dear, if the 'anything' exists, which in this case I doubt. No other shall supply your place. It would remind me too much of my loss."

"Loss!" echoed Olivia. "Say rather gain. The companion has become a friend."

"True again. But you have not told me of your brother."

"He is quite well, thank you, and already at work. His shingle was hung out yesterday—Henry Fullerton, in gilt letters—and the sweetest music I ever heard was the swinging song of that shingle last night. I would not let Harry tie it down."

"Has he had any professional calls yet? The music ought to bring them, if nothing else."

"Yes and no," said Olivia, hesitating and gently blushing. "An old friend called on him to-day and lunched with us. You must know him—Sir Stanley Dashington, a baronet, and quite wealthy."

"I know him, dear," said the lady blandly. "He is very handsome, and very rich, and very sensible. He is a Catholic, too, like yourself, and lives in some delightful place called Ballynabochlish, Ireland. I see he has wounded your heart already, and I know you have known him a long time. You deserted me; my revenge will be to help you to desert your brother also."

"My going will not surprise him," answered the young lady calmly. "It is to be expected, and I would soon be superfluous in the Fullerton household. My brother will get married some day, I suppose."

"And you must set him the example! Christian modesty, forsooth!"

"Christian modesty, forsooth!" repeated the young lady. "What in the world has my getting married to do with Christian modesty? I would give your doctrines a shot for that attack, but really I have nothing to say. I have shown up their foolishness, and I can't go any farther. To talk culture is to talk nonsense. Do put your theories of the beautiful into some practice. If you *must* worship beauty, come out to morrow and worship the latest styles. Such color, such—"

"In that way," interrupted Nano, frowning, "you always treat those things which with me are so serious. Do you suppose that I care for these vanities?"

"Ah! Nano," cried the young lady, "if you indulged your woman's vanity a little more and your aspirations after the unattainable a little less, your life would be better."

"I would smile, child," said Nano, not in the least moved by her friend's earnestness, "but that you are so serious. Nothing can ever take from me the convictions that now are mine. There is no other refuge, and I look for none. Death is the end of all—beautiful, mysterious death."

"Beautiful, mysterious death!" repeated Olivia. "Beautiful to him who looks upon it as the entrance to a better life, but terrible to those who see only its flowers and lights and fancied peace; mysterious only to the pagan and the atheist. For us One who went that way and returned has laid bare all its mysteries."

"Mysterious withal," said Nano, closing her eyes as if to call up some forgotten image. "The sea is a secret thing, and the frozen North, and the human heart; but none expresses such strange mystery as the faces of the dead. Oh! to see them lying there in everlasting repose, the seal of an eternal silence upon their lips, all sense seeming to be turned inward upon themselves, as if they were listening to and seeing and enjoying such things as this world never knew, and from which no foolish, worldly pleasure can draw them ever again! Mysterious death!"

Both were for some moments silent.

Then Olivia said aloud :

"I am growing impatient, Nano, and despondent. I shall talk with you no more about these things. It is best to leave you—to—to—"

"Well?" questioned the lady when Olivia stopped.

"Why should I mention One whose existence you deny? I was about to say, to God."

"As I should say—to myself."

Olivia put her hand to her ears and expressed in her face terror and disgust.

"Oh! do not speak so," she gasped; "I shudder

for you, dear, if God left you to the mercy of such a divinity. It is one of His punishments, and the most terrible."

"It is destined to be mine, then," said Nano, with a poor attempt at gayety. "But there is the bell for tea. Let us go down together. My father has not yet heard of your new departure."

CHAPTER III.

AT LIFE'S OUTSET.

Later that evening Olivia sat alone in the parlor of the little home which was to own her for its mistress days and months, perhaps years, to come. The conversation held with Nano McDonnell in the preceding chapter cannot have failed to give a fair idea of this cheerful lady's disposition. The kind, active sympathy of her nature, its graceful, womanly vivacity, so tempered by good sense and true modesty as never to exceed due bounds, were united to intelligence and piety of a high order. She was educated, too, after the fashion of Charles Reade's ideal heroines—that is, could speak a few languages besides her own, play the piano correctly and well, sing charmingly, make her own dresses and bonnets, and cook with shining success. Her culture, in the *transcendental* sense, was remarkable only by its absence. She was the black beast of the cultured circle to which Nano belonged, and where Nano admitted her in order to startle the refined body whose intolerance was as conspicuous as their professions of liberalism were loud and ridiculous. She knew no mythology.

Her sunny disposition found proper expression in the sunniest, purest, shapeliest little figure and coun-

tenance. She was not a handsome woman. She was too little to merit that appellation. Her light hair and blue eyes, her pretty mouth and fine complexion, her graceful alertness and well-shaped body, were the qualities which arrested the eye and gave Olivia the reputation of a beauty. Her pure heart shone in her eyes and gave a new expression to the loveliness which, without it, would be only the beauty of the flower or the butterfly. When she spoke, the sweetness of her voice, the good sense of what she said, the kindly wit or innocent sarcasm of her words, and the pretty dimples that ran up and down in playful response to her own emotions were sure to attract her hearers and win from them admiration and very often regard. One young gentleman of high rank had already laid siege to her heart and carried the outworks. She was sitting now alone in her parlor, her sewing in her hands: but the needle had dropped from her fingers, and her eyes were gazing dreamily, and with a shade of sorrow in them, into nothingness. Outside the wind moved the professional sign enough to bring to her ears a gentle squeak of the "sweetest music in the world." The fire was flashing and leaping in the grate, and the clock on the mantel pointed almost to the hour of nine.

"Poor Nano!" she said aloud, and the words showed of whom she was thinking. The sound of her voice awakened her from her meditation, and she resumed her work with a sigh. The thought of her friend's condition had long been the thorn in her heart of love and faith, and she longed to see her obtain the security and peace of truth. The interview of a few hours previous was not soon to be effaced from her mind. Some of its facts still rankled severely.

"I wish she had not uttered them," she thought, "or that I could forget them, or that her ways of thinking were not so wild. She is growing wicked. How can she help it, having no one to help her to good and refusing to look for assistance, when we, with every facility to avoid evil, find the work so hard?" Again, after a long interval of thought, she said aloud: "Poor Nano, poor dear Nano!"

"Poor Olivia," mimicked a deep voice from the door. She gave a little scream of surprise, and rushed to throw her arms around the neck of a young fellow who was just entering, to upbraid him for giving her such a fright, and to assist him in a sisterly way to remove his outer clothing. He sat down in the easy-chair, when the first flurry was over, laughing. In the strong light of the hanging lamp the faint resemblance to his sister was clearly seen, although his muscular development and rougher complexion took away considerably from the likeness. And, moreover, his face was grave and serious in its expression, and had care marked upon its outlines.

"Poor Olivia!" he said again when comfortably seated. "You have any amount of pity for your neighbors and not a drop for yourself. Didn't somebody say that charity begins at home?"

"Yes, dear; and somebody answered that *that* was no reason why it should stay there."

"And I say again that that *that* is no reason why it should make an old gossip and gadabout of itself. There is a mean in everything—"

"And especially in men," interrupted she.

"No innuendoes, if you please. There is a mean in everything, and it should be sought out. Shed some tears for your own pretty self now and then. Afterwards give away as much sympathy as you wish."

"I hate self," returned Olivia, half in earnest. "It is a very demon in the world. I speak from experience."

"That is an unsafe admission, and you scarcely twenty summers old."

"But you won't take advantage of these admissions, Harry," said she pertly. "You make too many yourself."

"Not so damaging in character, though," he responded. "But this Miss Nano, whose name is always on your lips, and whose excellent qualities seem to have bewitched you completely—what is she, a poetess, or a philosopher, or a blue-stocking?"

"All three," said Olivia earnestly.

Her brother held up his hands to ward off an imaginary dragon..

"All three, I repeat," said the little lady with great decision; "and if you knew her you would not fail to love and pity her as I do. She is a genius. She writes the sweetest poetry, equal to Longfellow, and has all the world's philosophies and mythologies at her fingers' ends. But her principles are of no worth and would not stand a severe shock, and education has so warped her kindly heart, and filled her with so much cant, that I must call her a blue-stocking. But oh! Harry, no handsomer *she* is there alive."

"Beauty is the gilding of the pill," said Harry making a wry face.

"What else is there to charm the men more effectually than a lovely woman? You want to sneer, sceptic; but look at that and be silent." And she pressed into his hands a photograph of her friend.

It was impossible to look on the handsome, intellectual face of Nano without emotion, and the doctor, hardened as he had been in the severest of

schools, and not inclined to surrender on the instant, felt a momentary thrill steal through him as his eyes rested on the beautiful countenance. He remained silent for some time, absorbed in studying the picture, while Olivia watched him with a keenness that almost bordered on anxiety and argued the presence of the deepest spirit of intrigue in her innocent breast. He handed the photograph back with a deep sigh, as if awaking from a pleasant dream. Olivia clapped her hands and laughed in triumph.

“Oh!” said he, blushing at his inadvertence, “photographs flatter.”

“So they do,” assented she, “even in this instance. For Miss Nano is not always on exhibition, and one may never rouse her into that attitude and that expression again. But oh! Harry,” continued the cunning enthusiast, “if you saw those lovely eyes with the fire of life in them—”

“They express pride,” he interrupted.

“And tenderness sometimes, and anger, and scorn. If the soul were but the shadow of a body in beauty there would be nothing to grieve for. She is a woman that can be led by love—”

“Where is the woman that can’t?” said the cynic.

“And if some strong, manly nature, gifted as her own, but commanding and good, were to make her his wife, ah! then what might we not expect?”

“Speaking from a medical point of view,” said the unmoved Harry, “we might expect—”

“You wretch!” screamed she in his ear, “don’t say a word. You are in love with her already, and I shall bring you to the next stage—jealousy. Dr. Killany is wild about her.”

“Indeed! I never had the honor of a close acquaintance with the gentleman, but I should say he

would make the very worst of husbands. Do you know I have been thinking of entering into partnership with him. He has a splendid practice, and probably finds courting and practising not agreeable neighbours. He is to send a messenger to-night to inform me of his decision on the matter. I thought he had already come."

"There has been no messenger yet. I do not like —but likes have nothing to do with business. Will the arrangement be better than independent work?"

"For a time infinitely better. It is a real stroke of fortune. Don't you see for many months I could do no more in my present position than pay expenses? With Killany I shall have a handsome salary. And, again, I shall become known in the city. When I do start on my own account I shall have hosts of friends. Yes, it is a real stroke of fortune."

"I am so glad. After all your hard struggles, Harry, to find a safe position at last!"

She took his hands in hers and they looked into each other's eyes. Her last words and her affectionate action had caused a burst of feeling that turned their thoughts into a gloomier channel and shut out for a time the remembrance of those who had formed the subject of their conversation. They could not speak, and a delicious silence settled on the room, save for the crackling of the fire, and the ticking of the clock, and the wind-born music from the professional sign outside.

They were all in all to each other, these two, although the first indications of separate interests were beginning to declare themselves. They had been orphans from childhood. Their memories of father, and mother, and friends, and home were too indistinct to give them deeper sorrow than the natural

yearning for these objects could bring. The charity of strangers had been father and mother to them. Harry had been educated in American colleges at the expense of a guardian whom he had never seen. The same was the case with Olivia, but she had spent her life in the convent of the Ursulines at Quebec, and was as patriotic a Canadian as ever breathed. They had not been often together in the twenty years of separation, but they had clung to each other as lonely, friendless hearts will cling, and absence only strengthened the ties of natural affection. A few years back the mysterious friend who had supported and protected them through childhood withdrew his assistance and left them to fight their own battle with life. Olivia easily found a situation, and in the course of time became companion to Nano McDonell. Her brother began the practice of medicine at Philadelphia. Not meeting with even hopeful success, he drifted to the remote towns, and finally settled in the city of Toronto, where our story finds its scenes and characters. His life had been one of self-denial and pain. He had no resources save his talent, which often brought him to starvation's verge; but his brave heart, strengthened by the simplest trust in God, never wavered. He was anxious to make a home for his sister, that for a few years at least they might know the pleasures of that companionship so long denied them. All his struggles were nerved with that ambition which was accomplished in the end. They sat in their own home, no longer outcasts. Their roof-tree was firmly rooted. In its shade they looked back on the past with mild regret. The mystery connected with their earliest life sometimes troubled them. Olivia had been too young to recall any incident of that time. Harry knew, or thought he knew, but it was much like a dream, that his parents were

of English extraction and had come from Brazil to New York. Some locks of hair and a few letters still remained to them as memorials of those dear ones. The secrecy which their guardian preserved was puzzling. They had never even seen him. So little promised to be derived from an investigation, however, that Harry had never resolved upon making an effort in that direction.

That was their simple story. Harry was a good-looking fellow of twenty-eight, with a fine figure, a severe, deep nature, and a talented mind. The discipline of poverty had left its impress on his character. His face, as we have said, was marked with lines of care. Their causes had long disappeared, but the suffering he had endured had given him stability and firmness of mind, had opened his heart to the keenest sympathy for others, and had taught him the necessity of unwavering confidence in God, its consolation and its reward. His disposition was noble and generous, yet shrewd, too, and full of caution. He had made too many painful blunders in his struggle for bread to give his generosity free rein at every opportunity. An honorable prudence guided even his kindest charities, and impulse was a thing of the past with him.

"Fairly settled, as you say, Olivia," he said after a long silence. "Yet I have a name to make, though in the meantime money will be plentiful enough."

"You will not find that so very hard," said she, with loving confidence. "I am not without some influence. I know many of the best and highest people here, and first among them is my poor Nao. Her friendship for me will bring the crowd to you. Have I been altogether useless?"

"My guiding star, dear," answered he tenderly,

"could hardly have been that. If you had not been near to cheer and strengthen me I should have succumbed many a time."

"And now," he added, as if struck with a sudden inspiration, "I seem destined to lose it just as I begin to enjoy its glory."

She blushed the gentlest of colors.

"I'm not to blame," said she, "and, as I told Nano, it is to be expected"

"Nano always! This woman has bewitched you."

"May I be far distant when she has done the same for you. The men are the silliest of creatures over a woman.. I could not believe it until—"

He would not take up her words when she stopped, but smiled and enjoyed her confusion.

"Until you had experience of it yourself. You haven't found it unpleasant, since you seem anxious that more of our sex should grow sillier still."

She looked up innocently, her manner when intending a crushing reply, but Harry was saved the proposed humiliation by a diversion in the hall. There arose without the sound of fierce scuffling, intermingled with words, blows, and the trampling of feet, and the next moment a young gentleman threw open the parlor-door with great violence, dragged in by the collar a young man, struggling, kicking, and reproaching, and crushed him forcibly into a chair.

"Sir Stanley!" cried Olivia.

"An eavesdropper, Harry," said the baronet, gasping. "Your pardon, Miss Fullerton, for this rough intrusion, but I caught this fellow with his ear to the keyhole."

The fellow looked up sideways mournfully. His hands and legs were dangling, his clothes crumpled and torn, his whole appearance very much like that

of a captive chicken. The beady eyes stared bright and inquiring at nothing at all.

"I ask pardon," he said, when he had recovered his voice sufficiently to speak, "but I must contradict the gentleman. He is laboring under a false impression. I dropped a key close to the door, and was stooping to look for it, when I was set upon and roughly handled by him. I believe there's law in this country."

"There must be some mistake, Sir Stanley," interposed the doctor. "Is not this Dr. Killany's messenger, Mr. Quip?"

"Your servant, sir," said Mr. Quip, appealingly. "I have a note for you. If you will obtain my release from this semblance of a gentleman—"

The semblance shook Mr. Quip with violence.

"You deserve a kicking as well for your impudence as for your dishonesty," said he; "people don't look for keys through keyholes."

"It might have fallen on the other side," Quip suggested, unable to conquer his desire to quiz. "I could give many instances of a like nature. My papa—poor old man! he died of a very interesting congestion—had in his—"

Sir Stanley shook him again with increased violence.

"I believe there's law in this country," said Mr. Quip.

"Then you shall have the benefit of what there is. With your permission, Miss Fullerton, I shall kick the thing out of doors."

"Which permission you will not get," said she. "Let the poor fellow go. He has done no harm."

"It might teach him manners and sounder principles of honesty. But as you command—" and shak-

ing the bird from his grasp with disdain, he came over to her side. Mr. Quip gathered his limbs and his rags together, and made a faint attempt to arrange his necktie.

"It's not often I'm so caught," said he in apology, "particularly in the presence of ladies. My confusion is too severe to permit of my remaining longer, and I beg that you will not insist upon it. I have only to deliver you this note, sir, and wish you a good evening. There is no answer required."

He handed a slip of paper to the doctor, made an elaborate bow to Olivia, and walked to the door. On the threshold he stopped and waved his hand loftily towards Sir Stanley.

"We shall meet again," he said, and walked away with the air of a crushed tragedian. The baronet's laugh rang in his ears as the door closed.

"Very melodramatic," said Olivia.

"You should have let me kick him."

"And have missed in consequence that tragic departure? Why, Sir Stanley, where *is* your humor?"

And they at once fell a-talking with the honest intention of finding it out, which gave rise to much whispering and laughing on the baronet's part, and wonderful blushing on the part of Olivia; and so earnest were they in the search that the doctor, who was smiling cheerfully over the contents of the note, allowed himself to be forgotten, and fell asleep in his chair.

CHAPTER IV.

WEAVING THE WEB.

An elegant building on a principal street bore on one of its doors the name and profession of Dr. Killany. The first floor was devoted to the mysteries of commercial life. The second contained in its area

the private office, consulting-room, and waiting-room of the fashionable physician. Dr. Killany was a man of luxurious tastes. His offices were furnished in the richest manner, and it was the daily delight of the doctor's patients to spend some time among his bric-à-brac collections and enjoy the charms of his cultured conversation. Such calls might be supposed to intrude on professional duties. Perhaps they did, but they did not diminish professional income. Time and personal advantages were not thrown away valueless on the whims of rich patients, and it was noticed that they who came oftenest and remained longest paid the largest bills.

The library or private office for the most held the doctor's presence. A bell from the outer rooms summoned him to the apartment for consultation. Mr. Quip manipulated the bell, and very often, as whim or need or occasion suggested, the patients as well. The waiting-room was his domain. A pretty table and some shelves in a corner held his papers and books—for Mr. Quip aspired to professional honors. He had the slang of the medical department to the highest perfection; and it was one point in his favor that through a close study of his excellent model, the doctor, he had acquired the professional polish and affectations. He was fond of exercising his newly-acquired powers on every safe and convenient object. To the uninitiated the ordeal of an interview with Mr. Quip was not the least of the terrors which attended a visit to the physician, his master.

At the earliest office-hour of the morning after his adventures with Sir Stanley Dashington and the Fullertons, Mr. Quip was sitting in deep study of a medical work. On his countenance were no traces of the indignities there administered by the indignant

baronet. A placid look rested there instead, as if he were at peace with himself and all the world besides and his thoughts were dwelling on more important things than the little check he had received that evening. Perched on the arm of a chair, his legs turned and twisted for support about every convenient projection, his eyes blinking and winking with cat-like regularity, Mr. Quip read, pondered, and gave an occasional utterance to the profound thoughts that were surging within him. There was no louder motion on that floor than the winking of his eyes. The soft carpets, carefully-hinged doors, and gliding movements of doctor and servant precluded the necessity of noise. Voices never penetrated through the walls. Even the tinkling of the library bell which Mr. Quip managed was silvery enough to be unheard by outside ears.

While the student was reading and pondering there came a sharp knock at the door. He was not so deep in his book as not to hear it, but with a due regard for the matter before him, and a proper understanding of his position as servant to the first physician of the city, he concluded to let the rabble wait. Therefore he read a few lines more, and was putting away his book and disengaging his legs from their various entanglements when the visitor unceremoniously entered and saved him the trouble of leaving his seat. The newcomer was an acquaintance, a man about thirty years of age, smart, well-dressed, and familiar. There was anger in his eyes, as they rested on Mr. Quip, to whom it was pleasing, on taking note of the mood of his friend, to get angry too, and to address the stranger in terms of reproach.

“Juniper,” said he, “you have been visiting this institution long enough to know that the strictest etiquette is observed in the waiting-room even.”

"Inside or outside?" snapped Juniper in tones so loud that Mr. Quip put his hands to his ears in agony. "Stuff!" continued the gentleman scornfully. "D'ye think, my hawk, that I'm to stand on such observances? No, no; leave that to those who get something in return for the money you squeeze out of 'em, sir."

Mr. Quip took away his hands from his ears and laughed softly.

"Very good, Juniper; I shall borrow five dollars from you on the head of that, or tell it as my own at the club. But I beg of you to lower your tone in speaking. What my deep regard for you prevents me from doing Dr. Killany would not hesitate to do should you disturb him by your unseemly manners."

Juniper thereupon went into convulsions, and roared so loud that the windows shook.

"Kick me out of doors, I suppose? I shouldn't like him to get his claws on me, if they are anything like yours."

Mr. Quip laughed uneasily and made a note in his diary.

"This won't do, Juniper. You are living too high. Witticisms from men of your kind spring only from good feeding. Your pulse is going at a fearful rate. You must come down to a potato diet, and take fresh air on the street corners daily about this hour."

"Not an inch do I budge on any consideration," said Juniper. Besides, I have news for you. Having spent my money on the hungry medical crowd—"

"Thirsty, you mean," Quip interrupted.

"And being obliged to go to work, I have got a position in the asylum, taking care of madmen, at fifty dollars a month. How is that for good fortune?"

"Not bad—for you," answered the other with a

critical glance at the swelling muscles of his friend. "You've found your vocation. Mind is not your department, but matter is. At least you save yourself from digging. And so our little circle will lose one of its best members, and we shall never more have the pleasure of feasting at your expense. How did you turn out so lucky?"

"Stated my case to an old chap who knew my father years ago. McDonell, the importer, got me the place."

"Quite a distinguished patron! He didn't lend you any cash?"

"No; perhaps I would not have taken it if he had."

"I wouldn't have tempted you with offers had I been in his place. I am not overflowing with cash, and I was hoping that you could have favored me in that line."

"You owe me some two hundred dollars now, Quip; and I swear I'll have it out of you in hard cash or in broken bones."

"Don't get excited," said Quip. "Do you think me dishonest enough to retain money? My position would be soon lost if I indulged in that work long."

Mr. Juniper winked at these disinterested words and took his departure.

"Call up some time and see me," he said in going. "I know the penitentiary is more in your line, but he asylum doesn't want interest."

"Not while it is conducted by lunacy, Juniper, of which you are the essence. Good morning."

Shortly after the call bell rang. Mr. Quip hastily hrew open the folding-doors, and a pleasant scene was witnessed—the distinguished doctor bowing his patient out, the latter the very personification of hope in his appearance.

As there were no other patients to be attended to, Dr. Killany returned to his library and resumed the meditations which the late episode had interrupted. The room in which he sat was a model of elegance, richness, and taste. Its colors were of the soberest hue, and it was furnished with numerous little curtained alcoves and stained-glass windows. Here stood a cabinet of bric à-brac ; from out a half curtained niche peeped cunningly a marble Cupid ; where a soft twilight hue lingered all day upon the wall hung a gem in painting. It might have been a room in an old castle, with its arched oak ceiling, its waxed floor, its curious shapes of furniture, and its strange design. The doctor, sitting at his desk in a costume of sober black, the subdued light from the windows falling on his pale, intellectual face, hiding all its lines of wickedness and intensifying its dark beauty, looked the very spirit of the place. His head was resting on his hand, and his brows were knitted in deep thought. Like his servant, he gave occasional utterance to his impatient and surly meditations. His interview on the preceding afternoon had been a satisfactory one, but its success had only opened up new avenues and new necessities of intrigue to his scheming brain. Intrigue was his element, but he could grow impatient over it, nevertheless. He was a Bohemian, a mere adventurer, needy but talented, with a constitutional distaste for work and a strong desire of rising to wealth and station at a single bound. He hoped to do this through Nano McDonell. The first step had been taken, and he was now considering the difficulties which still stood in his way.

They were two : the impossibility of winning Nano's love and the intended restitution which McDonell had spoken of. To obtain Nano as a wife and retain the

dowry intact were the present objects of his scheming. He felt that it was impossible to attach Miss McDonell to him by any ties of affection. With her keen perception of character she had read him, in the first days of their acquaintance, through and through. Interest was the only bond which could unite them.

The second difficulty was the more easily arranged, since it depended solely on overcoming the first. One fact was uppermost in Killany's mind—restitution. The glimpse of his changing dispositions which Mr. McDonell had unwisely afforded him alarmed him more than can be conceived. It was an unexpected feature in the game, and rendered the confinement of the silly old man an imperative necessity. To get rid of him by murder was a means from which Killany would always shrink. In his economy it was a mistake, an egregious blunder, and equivalent to a surrender of the scheme which it was intended to assist. He could be made idiotic, but to this Nano would never consent, little as she cared for the parent who had never given her ten words of fatherly affection in his life. A gentle restraint might be employed, and lunatic asylums were not yet without abuses. It would be a severe strain on Miss McDonell's virtue to stoop to things so eminently at variance with her education. Culture has no principles to face necessity, however, and he felt no fear but that with his assistance she would reason wrong right upon the present occasion. It was done every day in matters where there was little at stake, and why not extend the application of the rule?

The doctor thought and said many other things, in the course of an hour, more or less connected with this subject. He was a man of caution, skilled in the weaknesses and strengths of his own character, and

rarely committed a blunder in that respect. Yet his habit of thinking aloud, although it had never yet led him into actual danger, was imprudent. It was even dangerous, he would have said and felt, had he seen the position which for a long time Mr. Quip occupied at his door. That gentleman never lost an opportunity of using his ears, which had a great affection and fitness for keyholes, and during the meditations of his master every involuntary remark had entered through his greedy auricular organ, causing the strangest imaginable contortions of his face. However, the remarks were disjointed, being uttered at long intervals, and Mr. Quip was no wiser in the end.

The sound of footsteps on the stairs drew Mr. Quip from his pleasant occupation. He hastened into the waiting room, and was at the door in time to receive Miss McDonell, who entered with the air of one not a stranger to the surroundings. Indeed, she had often been there before, and, as a distant relative of the physician, was privileged with admission into the sacred precincts of the library. The theatrical proceedings were omitted in her case. Mr. Quip, with solemn bows and an official expression, led her to the door of the penetralia, threw it open with a profound salaam, and announced Miss McDonell. Killany for a moment looked anxious and annoyed, but he came forward smilingly to take her hand and lead her to a seat, expressing his delight at the honor of her presence, and saying many civil and ordinary things in a warm and devoted fashion. She received them languidly as a matter of course.

“ You are to dine with us to-day,” she said. “ I hope you have not forgotten it.”

“ It would be impossible to forget, Miss Nano.”

“ And you can make a professional visit at the same

time. My father complains of indisposition. Though not actually ill, he looks haggard enough to suit an ill-wisher."

Killany started imperceptibly and looked at her keenly. Her gaze was turned from him. She was watching the light falling through the closed windows, and no suspicion of having said a sharp thing was in her manner.

"A passing fit," said he, with an inward wish that it were something more. "Professional and business men are subject to it. In your father's case I have the causes off by heart."

He watched her still to see if she observed a double meaning in his words, but she only said "Indeed!" and was silent.

"Do you know," he continued, "that Parepa-Rosa will be at the Royal this week? I thought you would wish to hear her, and I engaged a box for one evening. May I count on the honor of your presence?"

"Oh! certainly," said she, rousing herself into something like animation. "How very kind of you! And Parepa is to be here with her heavenly voice and her cheery face! It is so rare for a good singer to come to Toronto that this will be a memorable event."

He was about to make some reply when the silver bell at his hand gave out its warning.

"A patient or a visitor," he said. "Will you excuse me for a short time?"

"I am going myself." And she accompanied him to the door. "I wished only to have you call in time to see my father. Let me thank you again for your kindness in inviting me to the opera."

"Do not speak of it."

He opened the door at the same moment, when from the waiting-room Mr. Quip ushered in Dr. Ful-

lerton, and the three met face to face in the centre of the room. The blue eyes of Fullerton looked conscious, Killany was plainly annoyed, but Miss McDonell was innocence itself with regard to both gentlemen. She saw a fair haired, graceful man in the perspective, and, not having the honor of his acquaintance, ignored him. Killany, however, understanding her deep affection for Olivia and her often-expressed desire to know the brother of her friend, felt that it would not be wise, his own wishes to the contrary, to anger Nano by allowing to pass this legitimate opportunity of making them acquainted.

“I may presume enough in the present instance,” he said to Nano, at the same time extending his hand to Dr. Fullerton, “to introduce to you my new assistant and the brother of Miss Olivia—Dr. Fullerton, Miss McDonell.”

The faces of the pair exhibited for a moment the faintest expressions of surprise. They were of course surprised, Miss Nano at her own nearsightedness, and Harry at the unexpectedness of the introduction. They bowed and said a few commonplace things, and then, under guard of Killany, she continued on her way to the carriage.

When the doctor returned he took his assistant to an apartment opening off the consulting-room in the same manner as his own, and gave it over to his special use. It was fitted up in good imitation of the library, being neat and tasteful, but inexpensive in the decoration and furniture.

“As we have settled upon the main articles of our partnership,” said he, “there will be no need to review the thing to-day. This is your domain. Mr. Quip is at your service in the matter of messages and the like, excepting outside of office-hours. How did

you take in the appearance of our city belle, Miss McDonell?"

"She is beautiful," said Harry. "I have seen her before, and have heard of her often enough. Olivia regards her as divine."

The other laughed and went away with easier feelings.

Harry did not think it necessary to tell him that he dreamed of her at night and was half disposed to fall seriously in love with her by day.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE OPERA.

Dr. Killany had chosen the evening of Parepa-Rosa's appearance in which to acquaint Nano with the danger to which she was hourly exposed. Amid the enchantments of a brilliant assemblage and sweet music, at a time when her heart would be most affected by the glamour of wealth and power, in the silence and retirement of the box, he would make known to her the exact position of her father and of herself towards society. He would paint with the hand of an artist the frailty of the hold which she had on riches and station, her nearness to poverty and disgrace, and in the alarm and excitement of the moment he would thrust his advice and assistance upon her, and make her, willing or unwilling, as circumstances might direct, his accomplice or tool in the wickedness he meditated. The difficulties with which he had to contend had all been studied. Noble—naturally noble—was Nano's character. The bare idea of robbing the orphan of his right would have made her shudder; and with a strong sense of honor, based rather on transcendental sentiment than on any fixed principles, she would have

faced the direst sufferings in preference to enjoying wealth that was not her own.

It annoyed him that Nano had an angel whose influence for good was dangerously powerful. Olivia, in her two short years of hired companionship, had wound herself around her mistress' heart. Nano admired the simplicity and sweetness of this modest girl, whose virtues, although she had but the shadow of her talent, far outshone anything which it had ever been Nano's fortune to meet. Killany now looked upon Olivia as his enemy, as before he had looked upon her with dislike. Hating her very heartily, and being a very unscrupulous man, there were not wanting to him either desires or opportunities to do her harm; and his intrigues in that respect, his mean, unmanly stabbing in the dark, worked Olivia much harm in after-days. Slander is a two-edged weapon, however, and not rarely wounds him who gives the blow as severely as him to whom it is given.

The curtain was rising for the first act when Killany and Nano entered the theatre. Nano was in full dress. She formed a verging point for those engines of polite because tolerated rudeness, opera-glasses. Transcendentalism enjoyed a triumph whenever she appeared. "A woman of culture" was a phrase which the higher grade of society had by heart. In itself the phrase had no meaning for most people, but when pointed with direct allusion to a beauty, a genius, and an heiress, it embraced all that was desirable in the universe. Nano knew the impression which she created, and gloried in it - gloried in the beauty whose Giver she denied, in the genius whose inspiration was to her a superstition, in the wealth and rank which her father had sinned to provide. This vanity was a weakness she could not but feel, but a weak-

ness only in its expression, her philosophy or absurdity said. She was a fair mistress of her countenance and manner. Generally they expressed only what she willed, and a cold, indifferent exterior hid the flames that society thought quite extinguished. Not entirely were they concealed from the keen eyes of Killany. His medical education and training enabled him to detect changes of color or manner unperceived by shrewd ordinary observers, and he had already caught the clew to points in her disposition which she considered wholly secret.

He was watching her now, as they sat together, with restless, dissatisfied eyes that turned often and uneasily to one particular place in the assembly. She had but glanced around on entering, and had then given her attention to the music and the play. Until the curtain fell on the first act she spoke not a word nor took her eyes from the stage. Killany did not venture to disturb her. Instead he seemed rather anxious that her attention should remain fixed on any spot save on that which so often took his own eyes. The moment she turned away when the curtain fell, and, with a sigh of pleasurable relief, began to devote some attention to the audience, he hastened to engage her in conversation.

“Charming Parepa!” he said, “a jewel of song! The sunniest nightingale that ever sang a note! Ah! you have recognized some one.”

“My little Olivia,” said Nano softly and with kindling eyes. Her first look had fallen on Dr. Fullerton, Olivia, and Sir Stanley Dashington not far distant from the box, and she bowed and smiled in the most familiar way that her studied coldness would permit. Killany was decidedly angry. He had feared this trifling incident, and dreaded the effect the good angel might

have on Nano's feelings. For Olivia was smiling in a most lovable fashion, and making encouraging and affectionate nods and grimaces towards her friend; and the mere fact of her presence, the sight of the sweet, pure face, was as hateful to Killany as the face of an angel might be to a fiend. Sir Stanley was watching her movements so fondly as utterly to ignore the box after his first bow. Dr. Fullerton had smiled his recognition, and, as if struck by a sudden recollection, Nano had cast down her eyes involuntarily and turned to the stage again.

Dr. Killany gnashed his teeth politely.

"Very interesting fellow; the Irish baronet," he said in smooth tones. "Seems determined to have a Canadian wife, by all appearances. Quite a match for Miss Olivia."

"Perhaps," answered Nano. "The obligation, however, will be all on his side."

"Allow me to differ with you," he said quickly. "Is wealth or station to be counted as nothing in the scale with loveliness of form or character?"

"Assuredly yes. Have you not instances enough in real life to the contrary? Beauty is nobility and wealth. Having that, you need care for nothing else in all the world besides."

"That is a pretty sentiment. I know that the world worships beauty, but I know it worships gold too, and goes oftener mad over the one than over the other. See our smiling friends all around us. Could we not point out a round dozen who have sold themselves for gold, some doing it with beauty and worth attracting the other way? Your own Miss Olivia, for example—"

"Has a baronet at her feet," she interrupted smiling.

"And society as well," he added, "because of the baronet and, I may say it, because of yourself. She was obscure enough before, with all her vaunted beauty and goodness."

"Not vaunted goodness," said Nano in a tone of icy and cutting reproof.

"I beg your pardon. I was getting warm, and the expression was not intended. But in reason, my dear Miss Nano, what comparison can there be between the comfort and dignity of wealth with rank, and the possession of mere beauty, whether of character or form?"

"You *will* force me to discuss the question," she said, still smiling, "when I wish to listen to the music and look at my friends below. In reason, my dear doctor, what is the use of going to the opera, if you do not go to enjoy it? I am tired of these endless discourses which it pleases the blue-stockings and culture-dried fossils of our circle to indulge in. I must find relief from them here, at least."

She smiled at Olivia, who was making a sly pantomime expression of pretty distaste of the attentions of Sir Stanley. Dr. Killany was baffled but not subdued. He had been leading her diplomatically up to the matter of his intrigue, but on the very threshold she had turned and fled. It was vexatious, and—he smiled. Shortly after the curtain went up and there was nothing more to be said until the end of the second act.

The doctor never removed his eyes from her face, though he appeared to be as deeply engaged as she in listening to scenes and harmonies. With calm persistence he returned to his point when the curtain went down the second time.

He remained cunningly silent until Nano addressed

him. "You seem to be in deep thought," she said. "Comparing beauty and riches still?"

"Pardon me, but I could not help it. The subject is interesting. Its only solution, I think, is always to let beauty and wealth go together."

"That would be unfair, doctor. I speak for an equal division."

"Were it given you to choose," he said abruptly, "would you give up your face, or keep it and go down to poverty?"

"Poverty! What a distressing word!" And she shivered a little, but did not answer.

"You are evading the question, Miss McDonell."

"Well, then, I shall not desert my standard. I would chose poverty."

"And suppose that the alternatives were poverty or loss of your good name? I anticipate your answer."

"I shall not make any, sir. The question is not to be put at all."

"Good, very good," he said, with a sinister familiar smile, forgetting in his eagerness the customary etiquette; "such a disposition is invaluable to any one; to you above all others invaluable at this particular time."

She looked up in cool amazement at these pointed but incomprehensible words.

"You speak riddles, doctor."

"They are easily solved, Miss Nano," said he, still smiling, still forgetful of the insolence of his manner. "You will soon have the chance of testing the practical working of your sentiment, beauty is nobility and wealth—since you stand yourself very close to poverty and actual disgrace."

To the fact that his words were flippantly and

coarsely uttered she paid more attention than to their meaning.

" You are hard to be understood yet," she said, with her large eyes looking straight into his; " but there is no mistaking the impertinence of your manner."

In an instant he was all penitence and humility, and was inwardly cursing himself for his foolish oversight.

" You have mistaken bitterness of feeling for that of which I could never be deliberately guilty. I beg a thousand pardons for my inadvertence. Yet listen further to what I say, since I must speak in plainer terms. You stand as close to poverty, and perhaps shame, as could be desired. The wealth which your father enjoys is not all his own, and, being at heart and by training a Catholic, he is dreaming of restoring to those whom he has wronged. Do you comprehend *now*, Miss McDonell?"

" Perfectly," she answered, and her doubt and suspicion of him sounded loudly in the word. " If it be true I begin to comprehend much more that was hitherto a mystery to me. Candidly, I believe that you are deceived or insane."

" Neither," he replied vehemently. " I have known it for some years, and the fact has not been least profitable to me. It purchased me your father's favor, which otherwise I never could have obtained. Having that, I had everythug this city could afford. We are related by blood, of course, but these are ties which never disturbed the narrow current of his generosity. If you do not believe me you may ask him. By so doing you will hasten an evil which it is yet in your power to avert. He hesitates in his plans because of you. Once break the ice once give him

your encouragement, and you will be left, by a stroke of the pen in comparative need.

“Get thee behind me, Satan,” she said, laughing. It was a harsh laugh and spoke of anything save mirth. The story seemed too incredible, and yet his earnestness made her shiver as if with cold. Killany had cunningly magnified the circumstances, in order to impress her more powerfully.

“I cannot understand why you should invent such a tale, doctor; and as you are not insane I shall believe that you have been deceived in some manner. Or is it a development of your cynical and ungallant theories against the power of worth and beauty? Or are you cruelly trying me? You cannot change my opinions; and as to my feelings, they are not in the least disturbed. My hands are not cold, nor my pulse slow, nor my face pale, when, according to the approved fashion, I should be in an interesting and exciting swoon.”

“This is trifling,” said Killany gravely. “I cannot treat you as a child who will not believe in the approach of a misfortune which she cannot understand. Your eyes will be opened only too suddenly when the evil has fallen upon you. Your father’s late illness was the first shock of a convulsion which may yet, and very soon, destroy him. In his sickness you will discover the truth of my information, but it will then be too late. He will have given his property to strangers or to the poor, and you will be a pauper.”

This was stating the case in rather strong terms, but the curtain was rising and the doctor was growing desperate. She at last felt conviction stealing upon her, and a hand of ice seemed to close round her heart and to smother its beatings. Poverty at last! Outwardly she remained calm. It had come

so slowly and so gradually as not to surprise her, and her command of herself was admirable.

"I believe you," she said suddenly. "And I wish to go home."

He would have persuaded her to remain until the end of the performance, but she was determined. He rose and entered the box to turn on the gas. A page was just opening the door.

"Servant, sir," the boy said, bowing, "but I was to inform the lady that her father had been taken dangerously ill, and the carriage is waiting outside."

One eloquent look was exchanged between Nano and the doctor. Coming so soon after their conversation this intelligence had a fearful significance. They left the theatre hastily and in silence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST FALL.

The most fortunate of plotters seemed Dr. Killany. The scornful doubts Nano had entertained were put to flight by the accidental illness of her father. There was no time to debate on his motives or his veracity. If what he had told her were true, it was to be supposed that now, if ever, her father would desire to make that restitution of which the doctor had spoken. Killany's heart was bounding, and he handed Nano to the carriage in silence. Her manner had grown strangely cold and distant. In the light that flashed for an instant from the carriage-lamp on her face he saw that it was very white, troubled, and despairing in its expression, and he knew that the inward agony must be very severe which could force her to such a display of feeling. Nano was indeed suffering a torture of mind

such as she had never before known, so keen and terrible that all desire of self-control had fled, and all care of personal appearance with it. Misfortune had never yet laid his mailed hand upon her, and that he should appear now in so deadly a garb was doubly mournful.

She remained silent with eyes cast down as they rode homeward through the streets. A strange terror had taken hold of her. It shrouded her senses like a mist, leaving liberty of motion and thought only to render the pain and mystery of her situation the more terrible. In vain she tried to free herself and to reason calmly.

There was no escape. The tempter stood beside her with his suggestions, and took a breathing personality in the form of the silent doctor. She shook him off with increasing fear and agony, and leaned out of the carriage to catch a breath of the air of heaven, all tremulous with the sheen of the stars. She was so harassed by conflicting emotions that the view of the great profound in its unfathomable repose smote upon her brain with something of mortal suffering. The great city had settled down into the quiet of midnight, and the crushing of the runners upon the frozen snow, and the stamp of the horses, and the music of the bells struck the air sharply, and seemed to leave behind them a track of sound, as a ship, in cleaving the ocean, leaves in her wake a pathway of whirlpools and foam. Why should all things be so calm and she so tossed and maddened? Did the stranger who, in passing, looked carelessly at the flying equipage think for an instant of the destinies it was whirling out of his sight and his recollection? Did the echo of her going strike upon the sleep-closed ears of those who went to rest that night

unburdened with care, and give a sadder hue to their dreams in tender pity for the sorrows of which they had no exact knowledge ? She fastened her eyes upon the sky. The "starred map" had always been for her a source of wonderful interest. She knew the constellations and their mythological history, and could weep melancholy tears over the misfortunes of the fitful heroes and heroines who now trod the sky with a purity, a brilliancy, and a regularity their lives had never known. But in such knowledge there was no comfort. The Christian looks up in his agony, and the meekest star that shines upon him is as the eye of a merciful God looking upon his sufferings, encouraging and consoling with its mild beam. *This was a part of her mythology.* It was a glorious dream to picture a Being of infinite majesty, intelligence and power standing on the mountains of eternity and flinging those gigantic worlds into space with the ease of an Atlas or a Hercules. Even in this there was still no ease for suffering. She never thought of looking there or anywhere outside of herself for such a thing. Self was all, and oh! how wretched, how circumscribed, how belittling that all. A kennel was a palace to it for dimension and worth. And still she looked at the heaven. There was so much of confusion below that she found relief in looking at its calm, holy, beautiful fixedness.

Her thoughts came to an end when the carriage drove up the avenue to her home. Lights were gleaming in all the rooms, and figures were moving past the windows in a way that argued no small confusion within. An hour at least had elapsed since McDonell had first been taken ill, and yet excitement and fear still ? Her heart was beating rapidly as she gave her hand to Killany and entered the hall. A group of

servants with frightened faces was standing at the foot of the stairs. All fell back as she approached.

"Where is my father?" she said gently.

"In his own room, ma'am," one answered, "and the doctors are with him."

They went to the library. Two medical gentlemen stood at the table discussing. A third was just entering from the bed-room beyond. All came forward at sight of the young mistress so pale and so composed, and tendered her assurances—non-committal, of course—as to her father's condition. Doctor Killany put them aside coolly and led her to the chamber.

"Is he conscious?" he asked at the threshold.

"Quite, but unable to speak or move. Paralysis; not a severe stroke."

She went in, and Killany closed the door on them. The valet was standing at his master's bedside, solemn and awe-stricken. A lamp burned behind a screen dimly, and in its feeble light the form stretched motionless on the bed showed still and helpless. She sank on her knees, overpowered with emotion, be-dewed one senseless hand with her tears, and laid it cold and clammy against her colder cheek.

"O my father!" she sobbed. Nature was stronger than habit, and her indifference melted at sight of his helplessness.

He opened his eyes and looked on her with evident surprise. Then the anguished heart, so mournfully imprisoned by the stricken members, told its agony in a low moan and his eyes dilated appealing, alas! how vainly, to the love and help of those around him. All the soul's expression and pain were thrown into his eyes. They wanted to speak, to impress upon his attendants his need, and they could not. He tried to

form the words with his lips, and neither muscles nor voice would obey him.

"Father," she said gently, "you want something. Oh! can you not tell me? I will get you anything, father—anything."

He could hear and understand. He struggled a very little, less than the infant born, and looked wildly around. No help for him. She smoothed his brow, and kissed him and fondled him. He could make no answering sign. His eyes alone expressed his suffering and his need, but no one could interpret those glances.

Dr. Killany looked in after a little. He had heard her sobs and the loving tones of her voice with some anxiety, for such affection was unexpected and might be troublesome. Her position angered him, kneeling with her arms around her father's neck and her cheek to his. He came forward and touched her gently.

"You are exposing him to greater danger," he said, "by your presence. He will recover, the physicians tell me, as the attack is not so severe as might have been. But he must be kept free from excitement."

She unwound her arms and stood up, but his moans brought her to her knees again.

"I shall remain here," she said; and he saw that her determination was not to be moved.

"When he sleeps," whispered Killany, "come into the library. There is something you should know."

She made no response, and he left the chamber. The head resting in her arms moved uneasily. As she stood up at Killany's suggestion the paralytic's eyes had caught the glimmer and shape of a diamond cross on her breast, and he was now endeavoring to push his face close to the jewel with an eagerness all unseen and misunderstood. She changed his position

and her own. He moaned and still made futile efforts to approach his lips to the saving sign. He looked up to her eyes and down to the cross mournfully, and at last she comprehended. Taking it off her own neck, she put it on his, and never spoke eyes so eloquently their gratitude and joy. From that moment he rested peacefully, and in a short time slept.

Killany was awaiting her patiently in the library. His face had grown anxious as her own. Her appearance, so woe begone, so still, so determined, did not reassure him, and he feared that he had not rightly estimated this woman. She came over to the mantel where he was standing, a curious expression in her eyes. Scarcely a week past he had stood in the same position in that room, and delivered his opinion on her character to the man who lay almost dying a few steps away.

"Well?" she said, when he made no offer to speak.

"Well?" he answered, raising his eyes languidly.
"He sleeps?"

"You wished to tell me something of importance. Say it quickly, for I am going to my own room."

"Your father has suffered less from paralysis," said he, as indifferently as she had spoken, "than from some want which he could not express in words—a fortunate fact for you. *I* know what he wanted."

"And allowed him to suffer as he did! You call that my good fortune, sir?"

Her eyes were full of anger, and hot words trembled on her lips.

"It is not too late," said Killany quietly. "A priest, a Roman Catholic priest, can be had at any moment, and that was all he required."

"Then a priest he shall have," said she. "Thomas, here!"

Killany put one hand impressively on her arm.

"Until he can speak a priest would be useless and add only to his agony. Moreover, he is not in deadly necessity, and, his brain being slightly affected, he might not thank you for gratifying its crazy whims. Besides, think of the restitution, of the succeeding poverty, of the certain shame."

"Restitution!" she gasped.

"It will be well for you to keep it constantly before your mind. You do your father no injustice in keeping the priest from him now. When he has recovered he will thank you for the discretion with which you acted. Do not, I pray you, let any sudden attack of filial affection interfere with your father's interests or your own."

"Or with yours," she said, furious at this gratuitous insult. "What have I done that such a thing as you—" she stopped herself there and grew immediately calm. "I am forgetting myself," she said, with a sigh and a weary smile. "When one is tired and excited, trifles"—and she looked at him from head to foot peculiarly—"are more apt to affect the nerves. Good night."

"Good-night," he responded. "I shall remain here, and call you if anything unusual occurs."

It was one o'clock. The bells were ringing the hour as she entered her apartments, where everything lay in stillness. She drew the curtains across the windows, for the calm sky with its twinkling lights was mocking the tumult that raged in her bosom. She lit the gas jets in parlor and bed-room, as if to drive away haunting images from her mind, and then sat down, not to rest, but to mutter over and over three words that had burned themselves into her brain and forced themselves from her lips—Restitu-

tion! Poverty! Shame!—and to feel a stab in her heart at every repetition. She had not yet begun to think clearly. How could she, who had queenied it so long over the multitude, endure to put aside her greatness and become even meaner than those she had ruled and scorned? Was not any fate preferable to one so humiliating? The abyss toward which she was hurrying herself by her morbid fears of suffering and her dangerous indulgence of this fear was not yet perceived. She only felt that a great blackness had fallen upon her, and that death seemed its speediest and surest relief. From one despair to another only could she go—from life with its humiliations to the grave with its repulsive, horrible nothingness and oblivion. Death was a dread; a greater dread met her to live. And so she thought on until from pure exhaustion she could think no more. Ideas became entangled, and sleep closed her tired eyes where she lay.

It was four in the morning when from her troubled but refreshing slumber she woke once more to consciousness of life and its misery. The lights were burning still in her rooms. The house had settled once more into the silence of the night. She slipped down to the library, where Killany slept, and passed to the room beyond. He, too, was awake, and the speaking eyes sought hers gratefully, and the low moan welcomed her coming. She knelt down as she had done before and took him in her arms, spoke to him with loving tenderness, and gave him hope of speedy and certain recovery. Once it rose to her lips to tell him that she knew his want, and that it would soon be supplied. But there was the tempter again to whisper of what she so much dreaded. Killany's words had more deeply impressed her than she had thought possible. She was afraid to run even the

slight risk of a priest's presence. Cowardice had seized suddenly on her bold, fearless nature, and in the very height of her affection for her sick father she was led into the first wilful, unfilial act of her life. It was a cruel and a useless one, she knew. Yet the dread of ensuing and unforeseen evils to her held her back. Over his head she whispered, "I dare not."

Miss McDonell was not at home to visitors during that week, and did not once stir abroad. Many friends called, and among them was Olivia, full of eager desire to comfort her suffering friend. Doctor Killany, who had coolly established himself as a member of the family, received them with much *empressement*, and sent them away again with the assurance that Mr. McDonell was expected to recover, regretting that his fair relative, the hostess, was not prepared to give or receive calls during the illness of her father. Olivia was puzzled and grieved that no exception had been made in her favor. Had another than Killany attempted to prevent her entrancé she would have promptly and directly appealed to Nano herself; but the doctor was her aversion, and she went away quickly, glad to rid herself of his smiling, baleful presence.

The truth was that Nano did not care to meet with Olivia during those days of trial. Her dalliance with temptation had rendered even the image of the high-principled and pure-minded girl a kind of reproach. How could she now endure her presence when her soul was black with the sin of a child's ingratitude? Sharper than a serpent's tooth would it have been to her father to have suspected her guiltiness. He had gone on during those long, sorrowful days making feeble attempts to reach the comprehension of those around him, raising his hands aimlessly and moving

his lips horribly—for muscular power was slowly returning—to form one little word of six letters, which comprised all that he asked of the world, and for which he was ready to give all his wealth in return. She could look at him, knowing his want, and, trembling, agonized, conscience-stricken, could pretend to efforts at understanding him—efforts that ended in apparent disappointment. She could look into the eyes so full of dumb agony and earnest pleading, and in her own express anxiety and wondering innocence as to his need. She despised herself, almost cursed herself, for this weakness, and the more because Killany was fully aware of the struggle she was undergoing. Yet fear and doubt held her back. She did not yet know the circumstances of her father's sin. She was not quite sure of its truth, perhaps, though if anything could make it certain it was Killany's assurance. Her resolutions were weaker than mist. When she came face to face with the issues her strength departed.

In a little more than a week after this first attack McDonell achieved the triumph of writing a legible scrawl on a piece of paper, and his lips framed with difficulty the word *priest*. There was nothing to do but accept the crisis. The certainty of having made himself understood at last threw a new expression into his eyes—an expression of infinite relief, as if a great load had been lifted from his body. He was back from the tomb into the presence of men once more. Nano read the scrawl, heard the word smilingly, and, with a little tightening of the throat, comprehended the results. But she nodded her head confidently and went away. Here began the real struggle. To deny him the priest would open his eyes to her real feelings, and she could not endure to show to him the hypocrisy of her affection. It was, per-

haps, fortunate that Killany came to assist her in deciding for the good or the evil. His fear of a false move on her part overpowered his prudence. If she would not herself resolve, he would frame the resolution. She received his advances coldly.

"Will you send for the priest?" he asked.

"Why not?" she answered.

"Do you not yet believe me, Nano? You are thoughtlessly cutting your own throat."

"And my father's?" she said, consenting to argue the point.

"And your father's. Nor will he thank you for it afterwards."

She was coquetting with temptation, and he saw it rejoicing. A few minutes of conversation and she would be won at least to delay, but at that moment footsteps came up the avenue. One glance out the window decided her.

"I shall take the risk," she said with quiet determination, yet inwardly uncomfortable from her own hypocrisy. "The priest shall come, happen what may, and I shall depend on *myself* to meet resulting difficulties."

He would have reasoned and pleaded, but a servant entered and announced:

"Bishop Leonard."

CHAPTER VII.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Both Nano and Killany arose at this announcement, the one with a surprised and fretful countenance, the other smiling and apparently indifferent.

"For Heaven's sake put him off!" whispered the doctor hurriedly, as the bishop's step was heard approaching in the hall.

"Too late, even if I desired to do so," she answered in the same tone, and the next moment was bowing to a stout, medium-sized gentleman, who took both her hands in his with affectionate anxiety, and said, gasping for breath the while :

"Bless you, my child"

Doctor Killany bowed distantly.

"I heard your father was ill only to day," continued the bishop, "and I assure you I was deeply hurt that you had not informed me on the instant. But I can understand. You look pale and worn, and did not think, in the alarm at so untoward an event, to do everything. And how is he, Miss Nano?"

"Improving rapidly," replied Nano, successfully counterfeiting cheerfulness "Indeed, he can write a little and say a few words. In a few days he will be able to speak distinctly, the doctors tell me. I must ask pardon for my negligence in not sending you word of his illness. As you have so kindly understood, I was too confused with grief to think of anything, and left all to our friend Dr. Killany."

"And I," said the ready doctor, quietly accepting the responsibility which with some maliciousness she placed upon him—"I, acting upon medical advice, announced to no one his illness, and bravely turned away all who came to see Mr. McDonell. I am glad that your lordship was not subjected to the same treatment."

"Indeed!" said the bishop, smiling grimly at this frankness. Bishop Leonard was not the handsomest man in the world, nor the most distinguished looking, important as was the part which he played in the history of the church in Canada. His face indicated the possession of good administrative and diplomatic talent. The forehead was broad though not high, the

eyes of a deep piercing gray and hidden by the non-committal spectacles, the mouth gentle and sweet in its expression, and the chin as determined and set in its outline as decision of character seems to require. His nose, however, was short and stubby, and his complexion sallow. A few locks of dark hair were thinly scattered over his head. The bald spot was covered by a skull-cap, which had such a habit of disarranging itself and the neighboring locks at every move that much of his time was spent in rearrangement. His manner was naturally graceful, dignified, and courtly, but rheumatism had taken from these qualities considerably, and in kneeling or sitting he found the greatest difficulty in the world. He was a shrewd business man, hard and exacting when necessary, and blessed with a good knowledge of mankind, and of political mankind in particular, with whom his dealings were of the most pugnacious nature. As administrative head of a body whose growing political importance was a thing to be considered in the arrangements of party men, he was a power in the state; and the ambiguous smile that had become a characteristic of his face, and which was now beaming on Killany, was a trick he had learned in his intercourse with slippery politicians.

"If it is not asking too much," he said, rousing himself from a little reverie into which he had fallen while looking at the doctor, "I would like to see your father."

"There is nothing to hinder," replied Nano, conscious that Killany was appealing to her with all his eyes. "Do you wish to see him alone, or shall I remain with you?"

The occasion seemed so urgent that Killany could not resist the temptation, when the bishop for a mo-

ment dropped his eyes, to make an impassioned gesture of entreaty and warning. His lordship saw it quite as easily as if he were looking at the gentleman, and comprehended it too, as, with an innocent air, he said :

“ Be it as you please, Miss Nano. What I have to say to my old friend need not be hidden from his daughter, unless it be your own desire or his.”

They left her room for the library. Killany seeing that he prevailed nothing over Nano's resolution, had silently departed, and speeding his way to the sick man's room, where he dismissed the valet, informed McDonell of the bishop's coming, and apparently departed by the door. However, when Nano and the prelate entered he was concealed behind a screen at the further end of the apartment, ready for developments.

“ Father,” she said, stooping to kiss his cheek, “ Bishop Leonard is here to see you.”

“ Glad!” muttered the invalid in a thick, almost inaudible voice, extending both his shrivelled hands. He repeated the words several times, with such a kindling of the eyes and such a depth of feeling that Nano, who had looked upon his agony so coldly, was torn with sudden anguish and wept silently. He held the bishop's hands tightly, like a man who grasped his only support on a perilous ocean, and he would not let them go. Then Nano, half-frightened at her own boldness, yet conscious of having done something which gave a momentary ease to her aching heart, left them.

In her room she found Olivia, who at sight of her opened the treasure-house of her imagination and eloquence, and made a grand display of both, to her own satisfaction. Her appearance was very welcome in spite of the irritation of the bishop's presence in the

house, and her indignation at the wrongs she had suffered, her astonishment at Nano's changed manner and face, and her fresh, hearty sympathy for her friend were entertaining and very acceptable to the lady who had been leaning entirely on self in those troublesome days, and had found the support so fickle, so comfortless.

“Killany met me so smilingly, you know,” she explained to Nano, “that I was sure he was going to ask some silly favor of me with his usual display of fine words, fine smiles, and overwhelming politeness. But the idea of my being told to go out as I came in never entered my head any more than it entered yours.”

Nano winced at this home-thrust, and laughed to hide her confusion.

“Why have you such an aversion for the doctor,” she said, “and he the admired of women?”

“Ask your own heart,” replied Olivia. “You admire him as much as I do, but you have the faculty of concealing your likes and dislikes better. I rejoice in them too much to hide them more than Christian charity requires, though I fear I do stretch the precept a little now and then. I can't resist a trifle of back-biting sometimes, especially concerning Killany.”

“That is wicked,” said Nano; and I, though a pagan, can reprobate such a practice heartily.”

“But on what principles? Don't attempt to answer, for I intend to do it myself. You reprobate it because it is not in harmony with the feelings of self-respect which you, as a cultured woman, are supposed to have; because you degrade self by taking an unfair advantage of an adversary; and because you would be guilty of a want of pride. Now, Christians act on the principle that to injure another's good name is the

same thing with stealing so many dollars from him, and they are conscience-stricken and enjoy no peace of mind until they have restored what they have stolen. There's law and logic, my love, and it seems not to agree with you."

"You can be tiresome when you choose, Olivia. Have I not read all that a dozen times in some works of musty fathers? What amount of rubbish they did manage to collect in their time!"

"Do you know Orestes Brownson, Nano?" cried Olivia in a very shrill voice and with an impressive frown.

"The pervert? Yes. But pray don't deafen me outright."

"He has given transcendentalism some of the sweetest knocks in the world. Did you ever read what he wrote of those old fathers whom all our learned ladies smile down upon so serenely from the heights of their own intolerable ignorance? He said—"

Nano put her hand over Olivia's mouth.

"I don't want to know what he said. The idea of such a butterfly as you reading Brownson!"

"He said that they—"

Up went the hand again.

"Olivia, be so kind as to leave it unsaid. It will haunt me for a week to come."

"He said that they were the authors of all that was solid in modern thought."

Nano's hands were clasped over her own ears.

"Now I've said it," continued Olivia; "and you may listen again. You spoke of those old geniuses slightlying, and I have defended them. It was Harry told me that. He reads all about these things. And, by the way, when are you coming to see my new home?"

"How often have I planned to go," Nano answered, "and how many untoward circumstances have occurred to prevent me!"

"Killany's been there, and his comical servant or student Quip, and—and several others. It's the prettiest place in the world."

"No doubt. What special attractions have you there?"

"My brother for one," cried Olivia, "the best fellow in the world. You should see him."

"I have, Olivia."

"Oh! indeed. And when and where?"

"At Dr. Killany's office. He's the doctor's partner, I believe."

"At Dr. Killany's office!" repeated she in amazement. "And he never said a word about it. O these men!"

"I haven't heard of Sir Stanley in some days. What has become of him?"

"He talks of returning to Ireland," answered Olivia promptly, blushing an ingenuous red; "but I think he will wait until the summer."

"You know he will, Miss Artful, and much longer, if you insist upon it. You may laugh, and protest, and blush as much as you please, but when the summer comes Sir Stanley will be here, and he will be here in the fall and through the next winter. It will end, as all these things end, in a wedding. I congratulate you."

There was a harsh chord in Nano's voice as she uttered the last words. The little picture of happiness which she had begun to paint in jest, contrasting so painfully with her present feelings, smote her with bitterness when it was finished. To know that she was so very far from Olivia's standard of virtue made her

envious. The flood of misery that had rushed around her, leaving untouched those cheerful souls that belonged to her life, filled her heart with rage that she, who had known so little of true happiness, should still be called on to endure while they went on carelessly, untroubled, and fortunate always. Olivia looked at her in surprise, and then laughed dubiously.

“Was it the croak of a raven I heard,” she said, “or did your feelings overpower you, Nano? Any way, your congratulations are premature. I never expressed a particular regard for—”

“Sir Stanley Dashington!” bawled a servant at that moment from the door, and immediately afterwards this gentleman entered the room. The Irish baronet was a fair representative of the modern gentleman of rank, and appeared to be thirty years of age. His personal appearance was more distinguished than handsome; but being the possessor of brilliant eyes, a taking smile, an insinuating address, a noble disposition, a name, and a fortune, he was, on the strength of these qualities, the reigning lion of Canadian society.

“I am surprised,” said he after the first greetings were over, “to find you here, Miss Fullerton. I thought your mornings were entirely devoted to domestic matters. It is just as well, perhaps, for you can do me the honor of accepting my cutter in going home.”

“How very convenient!” murmured Nano.

“Thank you very much,” said Olivia shortly, “but I cannot permit any temptation to draw me from the useful duty of a constitutional. As to my home affairs, you should know that their rules have a hundred exceptions in Nano’s favor and not one in any other’s.”

Sir Stanley coughed and Nano laughed, for both were aware that she was alluding to the baronet's frequent invasion of rules and exceptions.

"What a model of regularity!" said Nano. "What a stickler for discipline! It will be her punishment in the future to get a husband either more regular than herself or too irregular to understand her discipline. I hardly know which to pray for, both are so much to my mind."

"The latter, by all means," the baronet answered. "She must live not only to condemn, like a good politician, her present convictions, but actually to love, honor and obey their opposites."

"That could never happen," said Olivia in turn. "I would do many things before I would suffer in that way. And have I not a new door of escape? That fussy old member for Blackwood, who had to pay some hundreds of dollars for a divorce last year, has introduced a bill to facilitate such matters. Couldn't I, wouldn't I take advantage of it?"

"That would be disreputable," the baronet remarked.

"And utterly contrary to her own principles," Nano put in. "How often has she held forth to me on the wickedness of divorce!"

"Does it make it any the less wicked because I employ it in a single instance? But of course, being Catholics, we could not marry again. Very likely the first experiment would be enough."

She looked saucily at Sir Stanley, who was bold to say:

"Well, do not pierce me with your eyes, Miss Fullerton. Let us pray to-night for the success of the member for Blackwood. He is a charitable fellow. Having been nipped pretty badly himself, he is anxious

to save others from the same misfortune—a charity, take notice, that prevails among statesmen."

"His bill will be of some benefit," Nano said, with serious voice and manner. "I would not object to a little more freedom in this particular, though I do not fancy the ease with which our neighbors do these things."

Sir Stanley glanced at Olivia, as much as to say that they, being Catholics, must unite to crush this loose-principled lady; but she would not respond to the invitation.

"There is no need to discuss a bill which will never pass," she said. "My opinions on divorce in general, and American divorce in particular, are very well known to my friends. The Yankees are fast falling into the license of paganism."

"You are stirring the coals of a hot discussion," cried Nano in tones of warning. "You know that Sir Stanley and I are American sympathizers—"

"Pardon me for interrupting," said Olivia; "but why should these people be called Americans any more than we, or the Mexicans, or any other nation on this continent? Did you ever see them yet that they were not intruding on common or foreign property?"

"Now, now, now," Sir Stanley interposed, "our little Canadian is becoming rampant. Please be calm, Miss Fullerton. We can regret the existence of the facts you mention, but since they are well-established, and you must accept them, willing or unwilling, do so gracefully."

"Must is not the word," said she, becoming suddenly conscious, by a glance at a mirror, that her cheeks were glowing and her eyes sparkling in a manner very dangerous to Sir Stanley's self control and

peace of mind. "But there! I detest those Yankees —no, not detest, but I wish they were some other nation—Greeks or Turks. One might call them all sorts of names without hurting other people's feelings."

"You are in a blaze, Olivia," said Miss McDonnell lazily. "Talk of a cool subject until you are restored. Are you going to Mrs. Strachan's toboggan-party?"

"Certainly. I couldn't miss it. We are to walk to Staring Hollow and back again on snow-shoes."

"Better yet," said the baronet, "Mrs. Strachan has put me down as your first assistant."

"Oh!" pouted Olivia, "what a woman for managing!"

But she did not say whether the arrangement was good or bad in her estimation, and Sir Stanley, taking the former for granted, was made supremely happy. The recollection of the toboggan-party was a slight damper on Nano's hitherto cheerfulness of manner. She had for a time forgotten her troubles in the presence of her light-hearted friends, and had laughed, as men and women can laugh with the iron deep in their souls. The mention of pleasures in which she had always taken part reminded her more forcibly of her present distress and its causes, and deep and settled sadness took again possession of her heart. She was glad when an excuse arose for dismissing the baronet and Olivia. The servant announced the presence of

"Sir John McDonough."

"The attorney-general," said Olivia, rising; "then I must go. I shall have a look at the dear ugly old fellow first. He is my model of a Canadian gentleman."

"You will meet him on your way down," Nano

said. "He would feel flattered at your estimation of him."

The baronet and she went out together, and saw standing in the hall below a tall, slim, tastefully-dressed, middle-aged gentleman, with the air and bearing of a youth of twenty-five. His hair was long and hung in dark and well oiled curls about his ears. His face, which could not have been much homelier, was fleshless, knotty, and hard, its prominent features being a wide, smiling, sarcastic, good-humored mouth and a nose of the most fearless and talented dimensions. The wrinkles were numerous, the eyes large but dull in expression, and the complexion as muddy as the waters of a river on a rainy day. This was the attorney-general of the first of the Canadian provinces, afterwards, with varying fortune, the premier of the Dominion, and Olivia's model of a patriotic Canadian gentleman. He was said in later years to bear a strong resemblance to Disraeli when age, wickedness, and the cares of state had dimmed the personal beauty of that political comet, and the premier's admirers were fond of extending the resemblance of feature to the manners and deeds of their hero.

Olivia stared very hard at him in passing, as she had a clear right to do, being a woman and already acquainted with him; and Sir John, though he could not recall the pretty face that looked at him so slyly, bowed most courteously, as a statesman should who knows his business. The bishop came out of the library as Olivia was being handed into the sleigh by Sir Stanley, and she caught a glimpse of the meeting diplomats, each evidently being afraid to offer his hand first, lest a wrong construction might be put upon the act by either.

"Your lordship," said Sir John, with a slight expan-

sion of the unfading smile, "is not more daunted by weather and rheumatism than younger men."

"A sick person is to an ecclesiastic," answered the bishop, "what a wavering vote is to a minister, something to be rescued at all hazards."

"How is our friend McDonell?"

"Improving, but still in danger. I would advise you not to visit him. His mind has just been pretty well detached from earthly things. A fall from heaven to earth would be dangerous."

"Thank you," said the minister meekly. "I was not aware that my presence usually had such an effect."

"Could it have any other, Sir John?"

They were ascending the stairs by this time towards Nano's apartments, preceded by a servant. Sir John was supporting the bishop, who found the work of ascent very trying to his damaged legs. Nano was awaiting them on the landing.

"Church and State," said she, "never moved more harmoniously through a difficulty."

"It's not the first assistance we have offered," Sir John said, with a significance understood only by the ecclesiastic.

"The only one with so innocent a motive," answered the bishop, smiling over his spectacles. "I'll warrant that I pay with usury even for this favor. Look, Sir John, at this young beauty, our hostess, and feel remorse, if you can, at the insult you and your government have lately offered her."

"Insult!" echoed the pair in astonishment.

"Insult," repeated the bishop emphatically, "in permitting a member of your party to introduce a bill for the obtaining of divorces more easily than at present."

"Oh!" said Nano, and Sir John remained silent.

"It will not pass, I know," the bishop continued, "but it is the entering wedge of a more pressing agitation, the first lesson in a crime with which for the better growth of our people they should remain unacquainted. Your party deserves, and will get, I trust, just punishment for its carelessness and weakness."

"Consider the circumstances," said Sir John earnestly. "A powerful but foolish member rides this hobby. Practically it will never amount to anything, and to oppose him at a time when the situation is extremely delicate would do us serious injury."

"I must put an end to this discussion at once," interposed Nano, "by giving a casting-vote in favor of Sir John. I shall ask you to be satisfied with an offering of cake and wine. Come to the luncheon-room, both of you."

The old gentlemen sat down to discuss in peace the merits of the situation with the pale, fair lady so sadly racked with pain under her smiling exterior.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EAVESDROPPER.

The sixth day of his illness was sinking into a soft colored twilight when John McDonell could be said to have recovered in some degree the use of his limbs, though not of his tongue, and to have been roused from the deadly nightmare which had so long held him fast. The danger was past; he was to live, and the unutterable sweetness of life, the delicious content and security of that state so often misunderstood, so wofully loved or hated, so miserably treated by its possessors, filled him with a vague thankfulness to somebody or something—for he scarcely dared think of God—that the boon was still his and that he had delayed for a little the day of reckoning.

On that memorable evening when, sitting in the library, the hand of God had stricken him, and he lay stunned, dazed, helpless, ignorant of what had befallen him ; when from the hurrying steps, the frightened faces, and smothered expressions of alarm and grief from those around him he learned that he was become mortally ill, that his life hung in the balance, an agony had over-shadowed him as terrible as the peace and security of the present moment were grateful. To die so helplessly and miserably, without a single movement of limb or feature, without a voice to call for assistance and sympathy, more than a child, less than a brute, his dying pain expressionless, his despair unconsol'd, was a fate whose justice he acknowledged, but whose fearful intensity of suffering could even now set him to trembling with apprehension, and was to bring the glistening drops to his brow for many a day to come. To die with his manifold sins unconfessed, to go down to the grave laden with the possessions of others, to appear before God as a traitor who had denied him and sold him like Judas for gold, as a bad father responsible for the soul of his daughter, as a bad husband who might have rescued his wife from error, yet allowed her to go blindly to death, were circumstances that took a breathing personality for him, and stood leering and mocking, demon-formed, threatening their separate vengeance, around his bed. He would have cried out the name of God to banish them, but there was no voice to come at his bidding. He would have hurled at them the sign of the cross, but his hands mocked his will and lay motionless. Bound and gagged with invisible cords, ready, like the guest who had not on his wedding-garment, to be thrown into the outer darkness, he saw opening for him that hell which in the mad,

careless, secure past had seemed an impossible thing, a weak superstition, the barbarous invention of priests. He had laughed at it with the world ; now it yawned laughing for him. Its reality was piercing his soul with anticipated agonies, and his excited brain pictured it in the very room, a part of the very bed, where he lay. He saw its flames stealing insidiously through the floor, along the walls, by the curtains, along the coverlet, hanging over him, dancing round his helpless hands that could feel no pain, the smoke stifling him, the cries of unnumbered lost ringing in his ears. He could not fly nor call for help. One word he strove to scream out to his valet—a word which the man never heard but with abhorrence, and which had a cursed meaning in all but Catholic ears. With fatal prudence he had kept Catholic servants far from him, that he might never be reminded of what he had been once and should be still. His servants could not understand the great want which his eyes expressed, and which to the Catholic would have been his most intelligible sign. The devil had been at great pains to make these last moments as hideous almost as those which were to follow in the invisible world. If he could but pray! To whom? To the God against whom every action of his life had been directed in enmity? To the Man whom he had rejected and betrayed for gain? To the Mother whom he had insulted by his passive neglect and secret ridicule? To their friends, whose holiness had been his scorn and by-word? He would rather blaspheme, and he did in his madness.

The physicians came, handled him, discussed him, shook their heads doubtfully, nodded encouragingly when they thought he was looking, and said not a word in answer to his appealing eyes. They forced

stimulants down his throat, and performed many medical incantations over him; yet the one assurance that would have benefited him more than all this they withheld. "Shall I get well?" his eyes said as plainly as eyes could speak, and they were politely ignorant of ocular language. "Shall I recover my speech?" he groaned, and they retired to the outer room to discuss the groan, probably. It was at this moment that Killany and his daughter returned from the opera. To have Nano's hands clasped around his neck, and to hear the sweet filial and agonized words from her lips, was an unusual sensation for him, and at another time he would have wondered and put her away with smiling reproof. He did not now think of this, hoping only that her affection would discover his greatest need. Alas! even she, unknowing, could not interpret his anguish. His child might have been his good angel at this hour had he but felt long ago the importance of a father's position, the littleness of the power and wealth he had sinned and struggled to win, the truth and force and majesty of the religion he had deserted. He had lived a pagan, she would help him to die one. Every accessory of death only added to his despair. It would have been a relief to toss himself about and scream his blasphemies in the ears of horrified listeners. Yet even this was denied him. Cold, dead, ready for the tomb and yet alive, every inward sense sharpened by peril to ten times its ordinary acuteness, down to the grave and into the terrible beyond he was destined to go.

Killany's assurance to Nano that his illness was not absolutely dangerous relieved him of many of his apprehensions. The fear that had weighed him down as in a nightmare departed, and he slept from ex-

haustion. His sleeping thoughts were scarcely less fearful than his waking ones. The deadly burden of his helpless limbs intruded itself everywhere. He walked in lands blessed with eternal summer, but cursed with the presence of venomous reptiles. They filled every place with their loathsomeness, and the more beautiful the spot the more terribly was it infested. If the appearance of fruit tempted him, and he approached to pluck it, a snake darted from a concealment, and he could not fly with his dead limbs. When thirst brought him to a spring a coiled serpent lay beside it, forbidding all approach, or his helplessness was too great to bear him to the wished-for spot. Hungering and thirsting with water and food within easy reach, Tantalus-like he moved through the weary night, waking at times in deadly fear, and always unable to express it in more than a smothered groan.

The days wearing on brought him but little rest or satisfaction. The sun, that came through the window and lay in a golden heap on the floor for some hours each day, was his only companion. It was dumb like him, but it came from heaven, and, as he had learned to pray, he sent childishly enough his prayers to God with the fair messenger, begging that it, at least, would understand him and bring back a speedy and favorable answer. Each morning his eyes waited for the first ray that illumined the glass, watching until a thousand of them were flooding the room with light; and then he asked in his mind what news, and pretended to feel comfort at the answer that was never made. His limbs were not the only parts which disease had affected.

It was a moment of supreme satisfaction to him when, after eight days of enforced silence, he was able to articu-

late a little, and could move his hands sufficiently to write his name feebly on a bit of paper. He thanked the sun that morning with glad tears that at last he had been heard, and very gratefully, very humbly and penitently, received the bishop and his admonitions. He was ready, anxious, and willing to do all that was required of him; but being unable to speak connectedly or continuously, or even to write a long sentence, the priest contented himself with putting him in the proper dispositions for the confession to be made three days later. McDonell determined to spend those days in planning his method of restitution.

The devil, whose personality nowadays culture has banished from the circle of the truthful or possible, finds in it the occasion of his greatest triumphs as well as of his sorest defeats. McDonell was about to strike, as he thought, a death blow in the mind of one man at his own commercial integrity and purity of character, which was highly estimated in the world. This was no temptation to him, who had so severely suffered from remorse. Health and confidence were slowly returning. The misery of the past few days was becoming no more than a dream, and its sting was already half lost. The price which confession would cost him was tremendous—full restitution of his ill-gotten goods. The question rose vague and shadowy, yet importunate and daring: Why go to confession now? why make restitution at all until the moment of death, as he had at first intended? He put the thought away with a shudder, recalling the flames that leaped about his bed on that dreadful night of his early sickness. Still the idea thrust itself forward. His mind was pitifully weak. He yielded to every influence brought to bear upon him, and magnified terrors or securities to an extraordinary

degree. This act of justice which he was about to perform haunted him day and night. It looked at him from every object about which his disordered fancy could throw the attributes of life. The portraits on the wall, the marble figures on the mantel, the dragon-heads about the grate seemed to leer at him and say, "If you do this we are yours no more." Nano's pale face and troubled eyes disturbed him. She would be the chief sufferer. Wealth was not what it had been to him, but to her, so beautiful, so talented, so deeply in love with it, there was nothing he could offer to compensate for its loss. She would not be poor, but her present condition of life would be reduced to more than one-half of its magnificence.

The struggle in his breast between good and evil went on with varying fortune until that day which the priest had appointed to make his second visit. It was the turning point of his career and it found him undecided. Under such circumstances he who hesitates is lost. He could not resolve upon a final effort, could not determine to thrust aside the devil and do right at once and with honest courage. It was evening, and he sat in his invalid chair near the window through which the messenger sun had shone so cheerily during his illness. It might have reproached him now for his weakness, as before it had comforted him ; but it was already below the horizon, and the reddening clouds were the only indications of its presence. He could feel that he was losing his feeble hold on heaven, and knew in a confused way that the blame must rest with himself. He would not pray. He feared almost that his petition for help might be granted, and the resolution be taken which would so cripple his daughter's fortune while he yet lived. The fading sun seemed to be receding less than he from

heaven. Its rosy pathway downward seemed to be his own over which he was hastening back to earth again when he had been almost at the gates. The twilight slowly darkened. He heard the ringing of bells and the tramping of horses' feet on the avenue, and listened trembling to hear the sound of the priest's voice in the hall. He mistook. The priest had not yet come. There was a few minutes' respite for the unfortunate. He lay back in his chair relieved, and, with the weariness of a child, fell asleep in the midst of his harassing thought.

It was an evening of anxiety to more than him in the cold, lonely, sin-stricken dwelling. Nano had listened with not less dread for the priest's coming. She no longer doubted the story of her father's sin, so many had been the confirming circumstances in his late behavior, but for pride's sake she continued to look coldly upon Killany, his pressing advices, and his eager offers for assistance. To-night the dreaded confession was to be made, and it was to be presumed that restitution would follow. She had learned that the absolute poverty which at first she had apprehended was not to reach her, but the loss of three-fifths of their present income was as keenly felt as if they were to lose all. The power which she loved to wield must necessarily go with the money. Where had been a constellation in society's heaven would now be a star of an ordinary grade, and even its moderate brilliancy might be clouded by disgrace if the story of her father's crime went forth. Poverty was nothing to such shame. Yet out of her misfortunes there seemed no avenue of successful and honorable escape, and she grieved and fretted, as the hours of grace went by, in hopeless misery. When Killany arrived with the intention of persuading her to adopt his

methods of deliverance from the danger, he found her in one of her strangest moods.

"I need not mention to you," he said, "the crisis that is to be developed this night. You have thought of it often enough. The last time that the bishop was with your father it was agreed that he should make confession at this time, which means simply that he will throw away his property and yours on the poor, or rather on such money-begging adventurers as the bishop."

"You were listening," said Nano, with scornful composure, "to that last interview? You could not respect the privacy of my father's room?"

"I understood your necessity better than yourself," he answered in apology. "I did not wish that you should be taken by surprise, and I concealed myself in the room. Nothing was said that I did not expect to be said. The danger is knocking at your doors."

"Let it knock," she returned haughtily. "I do not fear it. Do you imagine that I would retain one penny of a property which is another's? Whatever my father does in the matter, if it be within the bounds of reason, shall have my full approval and support."

"I applaud your resolution," he said cunningly; "but the property belongs to no one, and your father, with his already weakened mind, will not act within the bounds of reason. The heirs of the property are dead. To no one can restitution be properly made. But the Romish Church requires that it be made to the poor, to some good work—a very fortunate arrangement for the bishop, who will now be enabled to pay off the debts on the asylums and other institutions of his diocese."

Nano was startled at this piece of intelligence, but

she was careful to allow no tell-tale expressions to appear on her countenance.

"It is not our property, nevertheless," she said. "I leave all to the wisdom of my father and the bishop."

"The mind of your father," answered Killany, with a calmness he did not feel, "is partially shattered, and the wisdom of the bishop is of a kind that will certainly appreciate the position in which you have placed yourselves. Once his grasping fingers close upon this wealth you will have to cut them off to shake his hold. One would fancy, Nano, that your mind was as much affected as your father's."

"I am not often prejudiced in favor of good," said she, with exasperating indifference, "and this is a fair opportunity to distinguish myself in the cause of virtue."

"Since you are to scatter your goods among the poor, then, I pray you, end the comedy by taking the veil or retiring into the wilderness. But there is the bell, and I surmise that the bishop has arrived. I shall not remain to see this game of football with your fortune. Command me to his lordship as a good kicker, for he will safely toe it into his strong-box. Take my advice and hear what passes between—"

"Sir!"

"I beg your pardon. Where great interests are at stake one should not be too nice in taking risks. I wish you, cousin, a merry evening."

He went away chagrined but hopeful, half-conscious of the dismay he left behind. Nano was now face to face with her destiny, as the "cultured" love to say of those delicate situations where nature and the devil on one side struggle fiercely with the soul and grace on the other. It was easy and sublime, while

the danger was remote and looked like the cloud no bigger than a man's hand to roll out platitudes of transcendental virtue, heroism, and self-denial, and to be politely scornful towards the practical but foul-smelling suggestions of Killany. Yet here was the hour of her trial. The feeble step of an old man on the stairs without was sounding a war-cry in her soul. Alas! instead of meeting the enemy with calm, unshaken demeanor, according to the best and most approved and most inspiring rules of the school, and as she had so lately met Killany's dark suggestions, she was meditating a parley and a disgraceful surrender. The maxims of Confucius and Seneca were making a helter skelter retreat over the moral battle-plain, being very much more ornaments of peace than sinews of war. "No heirs," Killany had said. "The poor will have all." Why not she rather than the poor—she whose father had garnered, preserved and increased the wealth which its original owners were not living to claim?

The bishop's step was at the head of the stairs. If she decides at all it must be done quickly. One minute of time is given her, for his lordship stops to rest after his ascent, and then comes slowly to the door on his bad legs. One minute, and the battle is fought and lost—lost, but not for Satan. Honor and self, mere material things, have been vanquished by the powers of darkness. Transcendentalism, to no one's surprise, has scored another defeat.

The bishop has entered and is shaking hands in his paternal way with a pale, composed woman whose whole demeanor is one of studied cordiality and self-possession. He is led down to the sick-room, where McDonell still sleeps with his face upturned to the evening sky. "Father," she says, touching his arm gently. The slightest touch awakes him.

"The bishop has come," he cries, with a start, and his voice is joyless and dead.

"His lordship has been so kind," Nano says, "I shall leave you talk with him."

Lights were brought in by the servant, and she goes out with him. The bishop is looking towards his penitent with anxious eyes; he hears the door close, and he turns to see that the room is entirely free before the solemn conference begins. She has slipped noiselessly behind the screen, has passed to the bed and around it, and is standing deep in the shadow near another door whence flight is easy, yet close enough to hear every word that is to be uttered. It does not matter that her heart is beating to suffocation under the humiliation which she has put upon herself. She has done a mean, unwomanly thing, and feels that she is capable of descending to lower deeps of degradation. Her face is burning there in the darkness with shame. She thinks of Olivia, and the thought almost turns her from her purpose. But no; interest, passion is stronger in her soul, and she remains until the end.

Bishop Leonard was too experienced a priest not to perceive that in the disposition of his penitent some serious and unfavorable change had occurred, and, determining to take the devil by surprise and by the horns as well, he opened up briskly, taking it for granted that McDonell was quite ready to do all that his religion required. But the unfortunate man stopped him ere he had well begun. Remorse and terror had decided him for the right; interest, when both were departed, decided as imperatively for the wrong.

When he looked up, in waking, into Nano's face he fancied that in her eyes there was an expression of pain and appeal, as if she knew of the misfortune about

to happen her and were mutely entreating him to spare her this blow. His heart shut out the grace proffered with a suddenness and decision that were appalling.

“I have concluded,” he said coldly, when the bishop began to speak, “to put off this matter of confession until a more convenient time. Your lordship will excuse me if I decline at present to discuss my reasons.”

“I cannot excuse you,” answered the bishop mildly. “You are not aware of the risk you are running in acting thus. Where is your good sense and your gratitude? He who rescued you from death, and gave you time to save your soul, expects at least ordinary thankfulness. You are showing extraordinary ingratitude. If you maintain this resolution you will have every reason to expect that when death stands at your door again God will be less merciful. It is the commonest justice.”

“I have thought of all these things,” he answered, unmoved, “and am not the less determined. Pray excuse me if I insist on your withdrawal. I am weak, and you are taking an unfair advantage.”

“Not more unfair than that which you have taken of yourself. The devil thinks little of such a proceeding, and we, his enemies, still less.”

McDonell reached for a hand-bell and rang it imperiously.

“I am quite settled in my resolution,” said he, smiling, “and if you will talk it must be before others.”

“As you will,” answered the bishop in deep accents of pity. “I have not been wanting in my duty, as you in yours. My prayer is that the divine vengeance may be averted from your soul and find its

satisfaction only in physical suffering. But your sin is great, McDonell, and must find a bitter atonement."

The paralytic did not answer. His immovable lower limbs, his palsied tongue and hands, his shattered body should have spoken to him more loudly than any of the bishop's arguments ; but they did not. He was possessed of the devil, it would seem, for a harsh spirit reigned in the bosom so lately full of the benign grace of repentance. He could almost laugh at the bishop's forebodings. His lordship rose to take his leave at once, and in so doing saw the vanishing form of Nano in the gloom beyond. The stars had betrayed her presence.

"Some spirit of evil," thought he, "is working in this house. The wise have lost their wisdom, and the honorable their honor."

CHAPTER IX.

BY LITTLE AND LITTLE.

No more honorable heart than Nano McDonell's beat in a woman's breast. Her whole education had been formed on what were called the principles of honor. She had been taught to detest a lie, and, without distinction of charity, a liar ; to dread so low a vice as stealing ; to use on all occasions, no matter how provoked, the mildest and most cultured language ; and to do a great many other things quite within the power of natural virtue. In the transcendental revelation attacks from without upon natural goodness, as well as strength from without to resist these attacks, were, by consequence of atheism, wholly denied. No attention was paid to them, and when temptation and sin came from these outside sources

the members of the school were never in a condition to defend themselves. Nano McDonnell had become guilty of ingratitude to her father, of tacit injustice to others, of eavesdropping, and of associating and actually conspiring with a man whom recent events had shown to be an adventurer and a villain. In the great fear of losing half her wealth and station she had been guilty of these crimes against culture, and felt herself hopelessly stained and irretrievably lost. Her doctrines were of the cast iron mould which do not admit the possibility of a redemption. Once fallen, fallen forever. She could not, moreover, rid herself of the impression that she was quite willing to go further, if necessary. And oh! how utterly she despised herself for this invincible weakness.

The morning after the bishop's visit she was sitting alone in her own apartment, thinking and sorrowing, as was her custom at this distressing time. Her face was thinner and paler, her eyes sunken a little and more than ever mournful in expression, and her whole manner one of hopeless and bitter disgust. Her hands could only pluck nervously at her dress or play with her trinkets. Reading, writing, work, and study she had long abandoned. The momentary vexations by which she was surrounded from the sickness of her father, the voluntarily endured persecutions of Killany, which she had not the resolution to put an end to, and the glitter of that mental Damocles' sword over her head, had so unstrung her as to leave her indifferent and listless to all but one harassing thought, the threatened loss of her property.

Her father had on one unfortunate evening failed like herself in his honest and just resolves, and for a time the danger was set aside. For a time only, she felt certain. McDonell had lost his health for ever,

and his business intellect was gone. He was intent merely on getting well enough to move around through the world once more as one of its breathing, living members, and to delay for a few years the dreadful day of reckoning. At any moment death might seize on him again. That moment would be the knell of her grandeur and present state, unless she provided against it. He knew that death's next coming would be sudden, perhaps, and he was sure to have foreseen emergencies long beforehand.

How was she to battle with the danger that menaced her? Killany had said that the heirs were not living; that the only ones who could claim the property were dead. If he could prove that might she not prevail on her father to make no *expose* of his old crime, and no restitution? Alas! he was a Catholic. The smothered faith was stronger than ever. As a Catholic he would make restitution. The heirs by blood might be dead, and yet there remained heirs still. There was no escape, unless—and she put up her hands to her forehead with a moan of dreadful anguish.

“Oh! that I should even dream of that,” she whispered with pallid lips. “Whither am I drifting? What crimes will yet stain my soul? Unhappy me! Wretched woman, that meditates lifting her hand against her father! O God, thy bitterest curse is not too bitter for that sin!” “God!” she repeated, with a scornful smile. “There is no God. The cant thoughts and phrases of these people have poisoned me a little. There is no God. But oh! if there is a ruler of this universe, as some have dreamed, why should I have so much suffering, so much temptation to do evil and so little strength to resist it? I would not ask to be exempt from pain, only to have such strength as

would enable me to throw off this incubus of sin, shame, and temptation that is weighing me down, down, down to—to nothingness."

She cast herself face downward on the sofa in an agony, and her hair, loosening, fell Magdalen-like over her shoulders. Very much a penitent she looked, lying there in the twilight of an afternoon, so sorrow-stricken and full of pain, so wretched in heart and body. But pleasanter thoughts intruded themselves afterwards. A smiling, manly face rose often before her vision, and its brightness lit up for a moment the sombre clouds that seemed always to hover about her. She was not ashamed to acknowledge to her heart that in the frank, blue eyes and noble disposition of Olivia's brother there was a something which roused in her a feeling she had never before known, so sweet, so mysterious were its throbings. She knew all his good qualities. Olivia had gone over them with as much precision and regularity as she used in saying her beads. He seemed so straightforward and manlike, so much the embodiment of knightly courage and worth and purity, that she could not but wish to see him try for the hand and fortune of one whom the finical and worn-out bachelors of a more distinguished society had found it so hard to overcome. So thinking and dreaming, she slept.

An hour later Olivia, astonished, dismayed, and sympathetic, found her there in that attitude of dejection and sorrow. With a quick perception of circumstances the little lady left the room again, and, hastening to the parlor, found there Nano's maid, whom she sent to prepare her mistress for receiving a visitor. In the meantime she sat wondering over the late phenomenon. Nano was ordinarily so stern with herself

as never to permit such displays of emotion at any time. Feminine curiosity was roused to discover the cause of the present display ; and as now Miss Olivia looked at things through one prism, she was prepared to conjecture and infer the wildest possibilities. Nano was awake and composed once more when Olivia presented herself. The young lady put her hands affectionately on Miss McDonell's cheeks, and, lifting up the pale face, kissed her lips with much earnestness.

" You need consoling," she said, with restrained gayety. " I am sure you miss me every day and every hour ; for it was I only that knew how to assist you in a mood."

" Was I ever guilty of such a thing as a mood ? " said Nano reproachfully.

" You would be less or more than human if you hadn't," returned Olivia. " A mood is one of the accidents of a person, and you must own to some kind of a one at every instant of your life. Some are more intense than others, and those intenser ones I call moods by excellence. You have been in one for a week and over, my love, and have not recovered from it yet."

" True, indeed." And she sighed and looked pensively at the opposite mirror, which reflected a very melancholy person.

" But now, that your father is recovering," continued Olivia, " there is no reason for your moping, unless—"

" Well, why do you hesitate ? "

" I take liberties sometimes " said the little lady archly, " and I was about to take one just then. I won't go on without a special command."

" I command," said Nano ; " and, moreover, I

give you full permission to take all the liberties that offer themselves."

"I was going to remark, unless you are in love."

"Oh." And the slightest tinge of red appeared on her snowy throat. She wished to cast down her eyes, but looked at the wall instead.

"You have suffered from the disease so recently," she said to Olivia, "that you must be well acquainted with the symptoms. I shall have to beware of you with your newly-acquired skill. But even *your* eye cannot detect anything wrong with my heart to-day."

Olivia was blushing in turn quite prettily, but unshamed like a child.

"You have a habit of throwing Sir Stanley at me," said she naively, "when close pressed yourself. That's a symptom, and the disease, though just showing itself, will be confirmed in a few days. I fancy that you will run to a doctor at the first."

Nano said "Oh!" again, and a cloud overspread her face for a moment. They were looking into each other's eyes, Olivia sunny, mischievous, and smiling, Nano sad, frowning almost, and preoccupied. The pretty young thing with a heart bright, beautiful, and pure as the morning was her friend—*her* friend, whose soul was like a rising cloud, black with possibilities, ready to discharge fatal lightnings. It was a sacrilege for her to touch the girl's hand. Would Olivia, she wondered, if exposed to her temptations, withstand them better?

"Why have you never spoken to me of your religion, Olivia?" she said, so suddenly and abruptly as to throw mountains of cold water upon Olivia's cheerful humor.

"Your question is my answer," said Olivia promptly and earnestly. "I preferred to let you see the work-

ings of our religion in my own fickle character, and have you begin the discussion yourself. But this isn't what we were talking about."

"You were cunning," said Nano harshly, and paying no attention to the last remark. "You were cunning, Olivia, like all your class. And so you were laying a trap for me?"

Olivia made no answer, but across her sensitive face went the hot blood of indignation and her lips quivered with pain. Nano was not looking at her, but presently she said:

"Why do you not answer?"

Olivia still said nothing, and Nano, turning, discovered the emotion which her unkind remarks had stirred in the girl's heart.

"Calm yourself," she said, "and pardon me. I forgot myself then as I never did before. I have been very wretched this long time, and was envious of the good spirits that in every fortune have sustained you. When you came to me, dear, as you remember, you had been a governess in many trying situations, and had before that left a quiet convent-home. You had suffered much, yet, orphaned, poor, friendless, your character escaped the stamp of melancholy. One would think you were the heiress, and not I. Under what lucky star were you born? Where do you find all this wonderful elasticity of mind?"

"Not in myself, Nano," answered she pointedly. "I was born under the star of Christ, the star which first shone on the deserts of Arabia, over the stable at Bethlehem, and has lighted up the world these long centuries. When Christians are in trouble they bear it patiently for the sake of Him who sent it, and because they are more like Him the more they are oppressed with misery. What you have seen in me,

Nano, is only the shadow of that which is in the lives of our saints, our priests and monks and nuns. I could give you hundreds of instances where weak women bore every suffering that man and life seemed able to give, yet remained trustful and cheerful to the end ; of women who were rich, titled, and beautiful, and who lost riches, titles, and beauty at one stroke ; of mothers and queens whose enemies deprived them of children and thrones with the same blow, and sent them into exile afterwards. Yet they were patient and lived many years of happiness. You know them yourself, for it is part of culture to be acquainted with such things. The source of their elasticity of mind was outside of themselves. They believed in God and His justice, in Christ and His mercy, in Leaven and its reward. Man could do nothing to deprive them of heaven and God. There was their strength, Nano. They lost all to gain all. I am their feeblest representative. The byways and alleys of the city will show you shining examples every day."

"Of women who have lost their wealth," repeated Nano dreamily, as if trying to realize the same misfortune for herself. "I have often thought, if that misfortune came to me, what I should do. I would be tempted to do almost anything rather than become poor."

"Who would not? But it is one thing to be tempted and another to sin. When the decision of a case is left to self you will find it a most partial judge. There is a code among the cultured, I suppose ; but it is nobody's business how it is kept except one's own."

"And, Olivia, if you were rich, but discovered that your riches were another's and not yours, would you not be tempted to retain them at any cost?"

"I am certain of it," answered she, with such emphasis that Nano laughed; "but by the strength of God, I would let the riches go, and carry at least peace of conscience into poverty."

"It is well to talk when you have never been tried."

"Ah! you are sighing as if the same misfortune were about to happen to yourself."

Nano laughed again a musical, mirthful laugh, and looking frankly into her friend's face; but she was secretly alarmed at the guesswork of Olivia. However, her acting was enough to allay any untoward suspicion.

"Nano, remember my old warning," continued Olivia. "You will never know real peace of heart, real happiness, until you have come to the truth. It breaks my heart to think how widely we are separated on earth, and how much more widely we may be separated outside of it."

"We will lie side by side, Olivia, until our bodies are dust, and when it has mingled we shall be close enough."

"For us there is a day of resurrection," said Olivia solemnly, "and then comes the real separation."

"An impossible doctrine, but very beautiful."

"Ah! me, beautiful," sighed Olivia. "Everything is beautiful, or sublime, or nonsenical with the cultured atheist. You are like people in perpetual immovable spectacles of green glass. All things are of the same hue, and the earth has about as much real beauty for you as for a cow, who measures her happiness by the color of the grass."

"That is sarcasm; and since you have opened fire, you may as well depart at once. I hear Dr. Killany's voice in the hall. He is come to see my father, and I know you detest him."

Olivia rose hurriedly, saying:

"I fear him more. He has an evil eye for me always. I cannot help thinking he would do me harm, if it were possible."

"He would not dare so much," said Nano, with a dangerous light in her eyes.

"Never mind. I fear he is your bad angel, Nano, and that he rages because of the influence I have with you."

Then elegant lady could not repress a slight shiver.

"Perhaps. But I have measured him," she answered.

"Then I feel reassured. He loves you Nano, or your wealth. You have understood that, too."

"Oh! a long time, my pet. I see you are angling for something stronger from me than I have yet said. Well, know, then, that I detest him as much as you do—perhaps a few degrees more—but I find him useful, and shall employ him for some time to come. But as for marrying him—bah!"

"Thank Heaven!" cried Olivia, with sincerity so deep and evident that Nano laughed as she kissed her good-by.

The good fairy went away, carrying with her all that was good in the McDonell household, all the sunshine and honesty it could ever know. She met Killany on the stairs. He exchanged with her a few words of civility, then went on to the rooms above.

The greetings between him and Nano were of the briefest and most formal nature. He was still as polished, urbane, and perfect in attire and expression as on the evening of our first acquaintance with him. The anxieties of the last few days, when a fortune seemed trembling in the balance, had left no such traces as those which unfortunate Nano displayed,

and there had sprung up in his mind a happy conviction that the haughty lady was becoming more favorable to projects in which her interests were so deeply concerned.

"Your father is much improved, Miss McDonell," he said. "He will be able to appear in the world within a few weeks."

"I am very glad, of course," she answered, with as much of the old indifference as she could assume.

"But you must know," he continued, "that he will never again be the man he was before this illness."

"It is not to be expected," she replied. "I am grateful that his life has been spared even on those terms."

"Hum! So I supposed," he said, looking at her from under his eyebrows with peculiar meaning. "And yet another thing, my dear Nano, which will be a trifle harder for so kind a daughter as you to bear, though it may turn out convenient; your father's mind is seriously impaired. Paralysis is not always confined to the muscles."

"Very true," she answered coldly; but he could not see from the position she maintained that her throat was contracting with sobs and her teeth were clenched in anger or pain.

"Weak-minded men," he went on slyly, "often do strange, absurd, and unheard-of things. Their fancies are wild. I would not be surprised—nor would you much as you love your father—if he should do what so many have done under the same circumstances. If, for instance, he should take it into his head that a certain amount of his property belonged to others and should find certain schemers willing to believe in

and humor his fancies by pretending to make restitution to the owners, when in fact their own pockets received all, it might be necessary—”

“Stop!”

She had turned on him suddenly, and stretched out her arm with a gesture of abhorrence and command. Her face was pallid to the last degree, her eyes flashing, her lips quivering with pain.

“Do not dare to say more. I am foolish and wicked, but I am not mad.”

“O Nano! Nano!” he said meekly and reproachfully. “I meant nothing. I stated only a disagreeable fact, which has taken place and will continue to develop itself without your intervention at all. The law cannot allow lunatics to have their own sweet will in so important a matter as the disposing of property.”

“My father is not mad,” she answered sullenly.

“Quite true; but he is likely to become so, and it will then be necessary to confine him. If he should persist in believing it was justice to give away three-fifths of his fortune to a scheming priest, I would get out a commission of lunacy. If it were to go to the original and lawful heirs, well and good. One might not object; but the heirs are dead.”

There was silence for a few minutes.

“Can you prove that?” she asked.

“Unquestionably,” he replied. “I took the trouble to prove it long ago, anticipating this moment, and I have documents and witnesses ready for your inspection.”

Lying was an art with the polished doctor, and he possessed the requisite conscience and skill to make the lie good with the aid of as many more as were necessary.

"Come with them on Monday. Now go, if you please."

The abrupt dismissal was not displeasing to Killany. He had gained his point with a weak yet obstinate woman, and he asked no more. Time was required to prepare his minor but important intrigues. He went away smiling blandly to himself, and stroking the back of his own gloved hand in self-approbation.

The abased woman he left behind threw herself on the floor in the same attitude in which she had once been found that afternoon. With her hair dishevelled and her hands clasped tightly above her head, proud, humbled, impenitent, Nano McDonell grovelled, and moaned, and sobbed like one bereft of reason. She made scarcely a sound that would reach through the walls of her own apartments, but the storm of grief and passion was none the less fierce from being narrowed in its limits. Alas! her suffering was not so much because of her sin as because of her pride. She, who had been looked up to almost as a saint of the new dispensation, had become guilty of that which even brutes from instinct avoided. She had humbled herself to consort and plot with such a man as Killany against her father, and she railed, not at her sin, but at her own weakness and her wretched destiny. She was humbled, but neither penitent nor resolved to do right. She dared make no resolutions, not even that most natural one, that, come what would, she would never be guilty of the sin of a child's ingratitude. When her grief had spent itself she sat down to think calmly on one shameful question: If her father persisted in his intention of restoring his ill-gotten property—be it remembered that, although he had delayed the time, he had not dismissed the obligation—would she take ad-

vantage of the slight enfeebling of his mind to hinder so undesirable an event?

“A month ago,” she thought, “I would have struck down him who ventured to suggest such a crime to me—yes, struck him down with these weak hands, or raised them against myself, rather than permit that I should so stain my honored name. And now I propose it to myself, and think on the chances of success without anger or shame. I can look quietly at myself and not tear away the beauty of that wretched, deceitful, ungrateful face, or crush out the light from those wicked eyes. O my God! if you exist, as many of the wise and good of this world have said, why do you leave me in ignorance and helplessness? Why do you send me such trials, who know not how to bear them or to ask for strength against them?”

And for hours she sat there raving thus, swayed by every new impulse, yet always approaching the fatal abyss, retreating in terror or remorse, returning in fear or shamed determination, until at last, when the dinner-bell rang, and she was summoned to appear before her father in his room, starting up hastily like one called to a death-scene or a scaffold, she cried wildly: “It must be done! it shall be done!” and rushed from the apartment.

The dalliance with temptation had reached its natural result. By little and little the strands of the rope were formed and the links of the chain forged together. Now, neither rope nor chain could be broken by human hands.

CHAPTER X.

“TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR.”

It was the hour for late breakfast in the Fullerton household, and Olivia, fresh and sweet as a morning-glory, stood looking into her jewel of a dining room with a very mixed expression of countenance. The coffee was smoking on the tray, the biscuits were getting cold, the steak was rapidly sinking into a flabby and juiceless thing, and all because an obstinate gentleman in a distant room would not answer the bell until he finished a certain chemical process which he had been studying since daylight. Olivia grew vexed at the delay and the mischief it was occasioning her breakfast. Yet she could not resist a smile of pleasure when her eyes rested on the pretty array of table-ware, all her own. She talked, too, with great volubility, addressing the knob of the folding door, and shaking her cap at it in so coquettish a way that the same action done at any susceptible young gentleman would have fatally injured his peace of mind. Talking aloud was a necessity with Olivia as a sprightly member of a class famed for its sustained and electrifying elocutionary powers. Being, however, a prudent little woman, this was never carried to excess and never led her into blunders.

“Punctuality,” said she, moralizing—and anyone would have stood as mildly and willingly as the knob to have the pleasure of hearing so sweet a voice and of looking into eyes so bright—“punctuality is a virtue

supposed to belong to men altogether," said she; "and since women allow to them a good share of this quality, I must yield to the doctrine of universal consent. But the particular exceptions to this rule are too numerous and too irritating to satisfy a reasonable person. I can't make my brother punctual. How, then, manage a husband? Here is a work of art falling into ruin for the sake of one man. And I can have no revenge? Let me see. None. I might break somebody's heart, but that would be too close to breaking my own; and I can't be sullen with Harry, no matter how hard I try. I can tease him, though, if I have a good subject."

The good subject was a long time forthcoming. She racked her brain for a very choice circumstance which should be her instrument in flaying her brother. In vain her meditation.

"One would think he was an angel for perfection, and I the opposite, so many are the scorchings I get, so few are his, for shortcomings. Every sentence, pointed with my name, becomes immediately an epigram; and these epigrams, being the cross fire of a baronet and physician, sting like needles. Oh! but don't I send arrows, rankling arrows, back, hundreds of them, like flakes in a snow-storm; and oh! by the way, it's snowing now, and the ice will not be worth much at the carnival. And the coffee, my precious liquid, steaming yet, but half dead from disappointment. So am I. Can I eat at all with half the charm of my breakfast taken away?"

"Half its vice, too," said Harry from the door. "You should never eat anything viciously hot, and those biscuits are ruinous to the digestion."

"You dear fellow, I would have some faith in those doctrines if you practised them yourself. But to hear

a physician of your standing crying for hot coffee, hot biscuits, and hot steak—”

“For somebody else,” he said, stooping to kiss her.

“But eating all yourself, with disregard of your own theories,” she answered, catching him by the nose and turning his head away. “When one hears and sees such things faith is lost. I haven’t any, and I shall eat as I please until I die.”

“Then the ‘die’ will not be postponed on account of weather, Olivia. But I fancy Sir Stanley will have a word to say in these matters.”

Olivia gave a triumphant scream. Her hand had struck a hard pasteboard substance over his heart.

“Whose photograph have you there, love-lorn doctor, right up against the heart?” cried she, clapping her hands in delight.

The gentleman threw out a card carelessly, then took his seat at the table and made a politely vigorous attack on the steak and its accessories. Olivia looked disappointed on catching sight of her own image on the face of the card. She looked at the back. “‘Notman and Fraser,’ ” she read meditatively, “Harry, I never had any photographs taken there.”

“You have a short memory, miss. I was with you myself.”

“That is even more improbable. There is some mystery connected with this card.”

It was examined very carefully by the young lady. She passed her finger across the face; the thin paper was slightly wrinkled by the motion. With a flash of intelligence lighting up her face she seized a knife and quickly nipped off the deceitful covering. The grave, sweet, high bred face of Nano McDonell looked out

from the frame. Such a succession of chirruping screams as leaped from her throat!

Harry, grave old Harry, worn out with years of labor, sad with old suffering, dignified by adversity, blushed the rosiest red that ever tinted the complexion of a girl. And the tormentor, delighted and astonished, laughed in the most shockingly rude way—laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, ran round the room twittering and screaming, and behaving altogether most absurdly. When he had done, "Thief!" cried she, laughing still at every other word, "this is my photograph, which you never gave me back, since the night you first saw it. And you carried it over your heart, fond, foolish old simpleton! But isn't it interesting?—a case of love at first sight.

"It takes a woman to jump to conclusions," said Harry. "I admired her beautiful face and dreamed of it—"

"Oh, to be sure—and dreamed of it."

"But knowing nothing of her character except some disagreeable points you mentioned, I have been very careful not to yield to the tender passion."

"Oh! certainly; and, like a hypocrite, you covered up her face, her grand face, with my little foolish countenance, and were going to make a display of brotherly affection, if I hadn't discovered the ruse. Oh! no, you are not in love, Harry."

"Besides, she is so taken up with Killany—"

"You were watching her, then?"

"Pray don't interrupt. It is probably a settled case between them."

"But it isn't. She hates him."

"That would not be the first instance of a union in which affections were as contrary as black and

white. She is a strong-minded woman, and wouldn't stop at that if it suited her interests."

Olivia took another fit of laughing then, which annoyed the hungry cynic considerably.

"Can't you let me eat my breakfast in peace?"

"Harry," answered she, with a serious face, "I'm glad of it."

"Glad of what?"

"That you are in love with my Nano. You are the—"

"Oh! is that nine o'clock striking? I must be at the office in a few minutes."

But she seized him by the collar, and hung on viciously.

"Not till I have spoken all will you go, Harry."

"Then out with it briefly."

"You are the only man who can save her. You, a Catholic and a hero, with your love and your big will, can save that dear lady from shipwreck. O Harry! think what a woman she is—one out of a world of women, talented, handsome, wealthy, great of heart, and wicked, as she cannot help being. Now make yourself knight-errant and rescue her from the giants that threaten her with destruction. Don't let your pride nor your poverty interfere. Attack boldly. She cannot help loving you—who can, I should like to know, you precious bit of vigorous, pious, loving masculinity? O my!"

And, quite exhausted, this affectionate sister and earnest friend hid the last exclamation under her brother's coat, where she had thrust her golden head to hide some tears and a rebellious sob.

"Well, well, well," said the physician, laughing, yet deeply moved, "we shall think of it, and no doubt the answer will be to the wishes of this kind little heart.

But let me give a bit of advice to you, my sister; only I can't get up so much instantaneous emotion as you for these occasions. Don't be too hard on Sir Stanley."

"I'm not too hard," said she, growing warlike.

"What would you call it, then? No answer. Well, let it pass. But he does look wretched enough sometimes, in spite of his commanding, indifferent ways."

"The clever deceiver!" she thought. "I did punish him, then. Poor fellow! I'm very cruel sometimes."

Aloud she said: "It's after nine, Harry."

"So it is, and the patients will be waiting. Good-by."

She stood in the parlor for some minutes after he had left, with a happy smile parting her lips, and thinking: "Could there be a happier morning to any one in the wide world, I would like to know? What I have prayed for a dozen times each day and night in the past year, and thought to be as far from being granted as ever, is sprung upon me with an appalling suddenness, and so ridiculously. And I could not see that all this time—that is, in the last two or three weeks—he was suffering the sweet pangs. Well, well, my breakfast is cold, but my imagination outreaches thermometers, and I'll fancy myself at the torrid zone or the equator—that's a slight reminiscence of geography," said she to the knob; "but don't accuse me of ignorance. I know that one is in the other, but for spite I won't say which."

There was not a dish on the table that did not receive an apostrophe of some kind during the meal, and the disappearing food was complimented kindly on its escape from staleness and the street. The morning passed away in the round of a housekeeper's

duties, and at one o'clock she was ready for visitors or calls. Her circle was quite as large as a lady without a dowry or a name could desire. Many a card was left at the modest residence, and many a stately carriage stopped for a few minutes at the door. At the fag-end of the afternoon, when the stream of callers was certain to be pretty well thinned, came the inevitable Sir Stanley.

"And it's ho for a jaunt!" cried he from the street, gaily doffing his hat to her at the window. But she shook her head so decidedly that he came in to try persuasion.

"It's no use, Sir Stanley, and I do beg of you not to tempt me. I have refused so many invitations this afternoon that it is very cruel to continue the persecution longer. I am expecting Nano. If she comes in state we shall ride out together; if she comes afoot, why then—"

"Then you can both come out with me," said Sir Stanley, "and I shall be the envied of men on King Street. I shall wait for Miss McDonell."

Olivia was thoughtful. This arrangement was not displeasing, and it struck her that it might be made useful.

"It is half-past three," she said, after a long silence. "Harry will be free at four, and it would not be out of place to have him join us, particularly if Nano is here."

"A very fair idea, Miss Olivia, and I am highly honored in this commission of playing the chief assistant to a matchmaker. I'll go straight to the office and force him out."

"I am gone," he said, departing on the instant.

At the door he met Nano.

"I have not made a mistake, then," said she, with a

smile of relief; "this is Olivia's, and the mistress is at home. I have walked through a maze of streets in my efforts to find the place, and was afraid that I would be compelled to return as I came. She is quite out of the world, Sir Stanley."

"The world has extended its limits, Miss McDonell. Since her majesty ran away from society, society runs after her majesty. Mrs. Strachan has been here, and you and I meet on the threshold. Is there anything more to be desired?"

"Nothing, I suppose. Good-day, Sir Stanley."

"Good-day, Miss McDonell."

And they went their different ways.

Olivia received her friend with a display of matronly dignity that was overpowering, as Nano told her.

"But I am mistress here, Nano, and if I did not show in my person all the responsibility and honor the office contains I would be unworthy the position. You, with your army of servants, find no difficulty in standing the mildest of figure heads, over your father's establishment. But when the butcher is to be bullied, and the baker frightened, and the grocer cut down in his charges; when you are in constant terror as to the result of a roast or a pudding, or a whole meal perhaps, then you feel the dignity of housekeeping, and you can no more help showing the feeling than you can resist the temptation of tossing your head when your hat has a taking feather."

"Oh! I understand. But did I come here to be lectured or to be entertained?"

"For both. In the wide world this is the only place where you will hear no flattery."

"Who begins to flatter himself is sure to end by flattering others."

"Epigrams are out of place in this atmosphere,"

said Olivia. "We are absolutely without culture, and, if we don't wish to keep out its representatives, be sure we do keep out it. Now come and see every part of this fairy house of mine."

They traversed the house from garret to cellar, and the resulting conversation was full of exclamation-points and cynicisms. Nano turned up her nose at the cellar vegetables.

"I have never been in so odorous a neighborhood."

"Didn't I tell you there would be no flattery here? The cabbages, poor stupids, won't hold in their perfumes even for Miss McDonell."

Miss McDonell laughed a short, dry laugh, full of ill nature and no mirth.

"I heartily wish," said she, "all sincerity in a cellar, if it must be as obtrusive as cabbages."

"As far as you are concerned it is at the bottom of the sea, Nano. Come, there is a delightful room overlooking the back yard that I wish you to see. Harry uses it as a laboratory and study, and it is a most interesting place."

"Full of scientific horrors and anomalies, twisted glasses that make you ache looking at their constraint, and medical volumes that he never looks at."

"Come and see," was all Olivia answered.

They entered an apartment on the second floor which was quite a curiosity for arrangement and ornamentation, and resembled in some respects the private room of Killany at the office. A book lay open on a reading-stand, its left-hand page covered with pencil-marks.

"Latin," said Nano, "and the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas."

"Precisely. Here is a very modern young gentleman who takes delight in the old Fathers you laugh at."

"And knows nothing, I'll warrant, of Mill, or Rossetti, or Emerson."

"Nothing good, perhaps. He has broken lances with some of them in the literary lists, and you can fancy who took second place in the combat."

"It does not require a great stretch of the imagination, if you were judge."

They returned to the parlor and sat down for a chat. Nano was not in the kindest of moods. Her manner was chilly and hard, and impressed Olivia disagreeably. She rightly felt, and could not give her reasons for the feeling, that Nano's manner was the outcome of despair. The causes and their recency she did not even suspect. It might not have surprised her much, though it would have severely shocked her, to become aware of all the wickedness that was planning.

They had not been long in the parlor, and Nano was beginning to soften into the old cheerful manner, when the jingle of sleigh-bells was heard at the door, and presently Sir Stanley entered with a bow and a few gracious words.

"I did not think to find you here still, Miss McDonell; but since I am to take off the mistress of the establishment, I shall plead to carry away the guest also. My sleigh is at the door."

"Of course you will come," said Olivia, "if it were only to be driven home. And I see that you have Harry with you, Sir Stanley. How pleasant!"

Nano looked startled at this, and was doubtful and inwardly troubled. However, she accepted willingly enough, and rose as readily as though undisturbed by any secret feeling. It was ridiculous to show any emotion over so ordinary and trifling an event. Yet she felt it would be better to be anywhere else

in the world, better and safer for him and her and Olivia, than sitting with Harry Fullerton. They made a most attractive party. The fair-haired brother and sister formed a good contrast with their darker companions. But mufflers are not adapted to the display of beauty, and they drove along without attracting further attention than was desirable. They ran across Mrs. Strachan at one point, and she favored them with a nod of vigorous meaning.

“How fortunate that we were not near enough to hear her speak!” said Olivia. “We would have the crowd staring at us otherwise. She can say disagreeable things in a very loud voice.”

“You must have been offending her lately,” Harry remarked. “I do not know as the rest of us have anything to fear from the lady.”

“Not I, for one,” assented Sir Stanley.

“Nor I, for another,” said Nano.

“Hypocrites!” said Olivia shortly, nodding to some one in the street.

“Who was the favored one?” asked Sir Stanley.

“That charming Doctor Killany. He smiles like an angel, and doffs his hat to us ladies with a grace that is inimitable.”

Nano smiled, and muttered “Hypocrite!” just loud enough to reach Olivia’s attentive ears. But Sir Stanley for a moment looked disconcerted until warned by a glance from Harry.

“You are all quite stupid,” said Olivia, after an awkward pause. “I have no intention of straining my neck every half-minute to talk to you. I shall devote myself to Sir Stanley.”

The baronet was driving, and Olivia sat beside him on the front seat.

“I am pleased at your devotion,” said he.

"I haven't shown it yet, sir. Now I shall criticise the extraordinary people that we meet, and you may criticize my criticisms. Here comes a very poor imitation of an English swell, newly got up, and trembling with apprehension lest the newsboys may notice his eyeglass and want of impudence."

"The whole street," said Sir Stanley mischievously, "is but a poor imitation of English swelldom and snobbishness. One would think that no other nationality inhabited this country. English customs prevail everywhere; and as the genius of the people is so different, the mixture is funny. I like to see a Scotch cap over a Tartan plaid, the kilt and trews, or to hear the ridiculous accent of the aristocracy from one that has been brought up to it. But look at this honest, big-headed, Scotch looking gentleman on the corner. His suit is stylish and belongs to the London world. His hat or cap, or what-not, is a parody on the head-covering of a Highlander, and leaves his head as bare as a pole. I will wager he has put on a thick layer of affectation over his Scotch brogue, and says on occasions, 'Be Jove, but the chawming creachaw has fashed me wi' a vengeance.'"

"I cannot forget that you are Irish," answered Olivia carelessly, "and an American sympathizer. That is enough. It is my answer, too."

"A pretty conclusive one, I admit, in this country. But I am not arguing on political grounds, but on those of good taste. I am told the Scotch have the ascendancy here. I see many examples of it. The Irish are not a cipher, though, as usual, their careless generosity has made them the football of more astute and less scrupulous brethren. The English portion of the community is not large, but everything is done under the ægis of England, and wears an English hue.

English names to everything, English fashions, English forms of speech, English sympathies, as might be expected—all English. You envy your neighbors across the way. Their characteristics are more distinct and more their own."

"I grant that most cheerfully," said Olivia, growing hot and enthusiastic on the instant. "Heaven forbid that we should be distinguished as they are in that respect! Give us the good old qualities of the English land, the sturdiness, the slowness, the determination, the sterling honesty of our forefathers, and you may have all such marketable commodities as Yankee shrewdness and cleverness and dishonesty."

"Olivia, you are forgetting yourself."

Nano's voice came from behind in low and gentle reproof.

"I am defending my country against the basest insinuations; and if the world hears me, so much the better."

"I made no insinuations," said the baronet. "The question was one of mere taste. You are Canadians by birth, cosmopolitan in descent, and English in everything else. Now laugh with me at this ridiculous mixture of nationalities."

"Don't answer the gentleman," said Nano. "You poor stupid, can't you see that he is quizzing you under your very eyes? I wish to go home, Sir Stanley."

They were on the avenue then, and in a few minutes were at the lady's door. Harry assisted her to alight. All were exchanging adieux when Killany came out on the veranda.

"He might as well take up his residence here at once," whispered Olivia to the baronet. "See how he looks at *me*. Oh! yes, I am the mischief-maker, and deserve all your hatred, doctor."

Killany was smilling upon them and staring stonily at Olivia.

"I shall make bold," he said, "to ride with you a part of my way, at least. I am very tired and forgot to order my sleigh."

"By all means. Jump in," answered Sir Stanley.

The doctors sat on the rear seat and talked professional matters as they rode.

"And, by the way," said Killany, "I have a bit of news for you. Old McDonell is becoming idiotic or insane. Keep it a secret until the case develops."

Harry had not time to reply, for they were then at the office, but the information distressed him so much that he was silent until the drive ended. Olivia was off the next day to a toboggan party organized by Mrs. Strachan, the leader of fashionable society, familiarly called the General for her commanding ways and successful management of out door parties.

The day was a delightful one, there being no wind, any amount of sun and blue heaven, and crusted snow which lay so deep that only the fences were in sight along the road. The road itself would have been lost but for the track which the advance-sleigh had made, and they could follow the trail as it wound down the valley and entered the woods on the hill beyond. Walking on snow shoes is not the most graceful movement in the world, although skilled and practised walkers go through the performance with an enviable ease and repose of manner. The legs are spread out and the toes turned in, and the forward movement is an insinuating, gliding process after the fashion of skating, but without a particle of its poetry. Mrs. Strachan's party were perfectly at home on the shoes. The members were thinking more of one another than of the special unloveliness of their manner of walking.

The jest and laugh passed through the merry crowd, and an occasional chorus from the gentlemen gave food for amusement and criticism to the ladies. The country along their line of march was thinly inhabited. A log-hut in a clearing, out of sight but for the smoke curling from the chimney, an occasional chopper with his axe swung over his shoulder, or the first traveller moving cityward laboriously through the great drifts, were the only living objects that crossed their path. They were under no restraint, and felt all the better for it. They laughed to the full extent of their lungs, singly, doubly, and in chorus. They talked very loud and all together, and the general, a very model of etiquette at home, was foremost in discarding rules here.

Olivia walked with a cavalier on each side to guard against accidents—Sir Stanley autocratical and indifferent in his bearing, and a Mr. Crawford meeker than the lamb. As a matter of course she petted the latter as he grew meeker, and snubbed on every occasion the proud baronet, who never would understand the drift of such performances from one whom he loved.

Fortunately the rapid march which they were making prevented any serious quarrelling.

The party had left the road, and, striding fairy-like over buried fences and hollows filled with snow, was entering the winter silence of a forest. Olivia did wish to grow sentimental over the loveliness of the scene. The branches above their heads bent low under the weight of the snow-mantle, upon which the sun at times dropped a ray of his brilliancy. The old trunks, straight as savages are wont to be, rose from a wondrously smooth but hollowed floor, and, like pillars, seemed to support the interlaced roof above. There was no apparent outlet, and they seemed to

follow no regular path, the party winding in and out through the tree-labyrinth, with laughter and song, under the guidance of the general.

"It wouldn't be much of a surprise to meet an old Druid wandering here some day," said Crawford, venturing, after much reflection, upon a remark which he had heard made under similar circumstances.

"With long, white hair," said Olivia, brightening, "and the most secret and terrible eyes."

"There's a more practical and useful inhabitant," said the baronet, flinging a pine cone at a squirrel and hitting Mrs. Strachan instead. Olivia laughed at the general's surprise when the missile lighted on her hood.

When they left the woods Staring Hollow was before them. A stout log-house with three apartments had been hired for their accommodation at the foot of the long hill, and its puffing chimney in the vale below carried the gayest and cheeriest of messages to the tired and disgusted snow-shoers. There was a general rush for the toboggans. The ladies whiped off their own shoes with great agility, and were eager to take their places without assistance. The gentlemen fought hilariously at the waggon, and the general, half angry, yet compelled to laugh at the boyishness of old boys, shouted and ordered in vain. Sir Stanley was wicked enough to seize upon a toboggan of the largest size, and to fill it, too, with a mixed crowd, much to Olivia's disgust. Yet he was careful not to bite his own head off in teasing Olivia. He sat in the rear, and she sat in front of him, and Crawford in front of her; and, unheard of this meek cavalier, the baronet whispered various pleasant things over her shoulder. The rush down the hill was brief but full of intensest pleasure. There is little time given even on the long-

est hill to analyze the sensations of a toboggan-ride, A feeling of airiness comes over you; you feel for an instant disembodied; an exquisitely, painfully sweet dizziness forces you to close your eyes momentarily, then all is over. You are at the foot of the hill. Having come down, it becomes necessary to walk up again, which is not the most prosaic part of the sport, if you have been properly favored in your partners.

The general with two of her lieutenants led the way, followed by six others, two abreast. There was a cheer from the gentlemen, and a gasp from the ladies, whose fascinating tongues found the occasion too much for them. At the foot of the hill there was an upset and a few collisions which amounted only to a laugh, and all withdrew to the cabin. A lunch of the hottest kind was spread in the main apartment. The general in her short dress did the honors, and was livelier than a girl of sixteen. There was an unusual amount of appetite among the party, and no attempt to conceal or stint it. In a short time the table was cheerfully bare, and the gentlemen, rising, left the ladies in the main room, while they retired to smoke and chat unrestrainedly in the apartment set aside for them.

"We had better stuff the crevices," says the general, with her Scotch nose in the air, when they were gone, "or the odious smoke will stifle us right away."

"Dear Mrs. Strachan, don't," says a pretty but elderly young thing. "I do so love the smell of tobacco!"

The general gave her such a look, but said nothing at the moment! They had a long day before them, and there was time enough for private advice. Whether the elderly young thing received it does not matter. The pleasures of the day were engrossing, and went

on without abatement until fatigue and the declining sun made welcome the final orders from the leader.

“Supper immediately; music and conversation till half-past six; then preparations for return, which takes place at eight o'clock,” were the orders which the general trumpeted from the cabin-door. The sun was just gone down behind the hills, and the fading glow in the west warned of the rapid approach of darkness. The moon had already made her appearance, swinging round and high in the ethereal sea.

“By the light of the moon,” sang the baronet, emerging from the kitchen dining-room with a skillet in his hand, “we are going home.”

“I would that it were by daylight,” said she, “for I am so tired that all poetry has been knocked out of me. I am more tired when I think of a four-mile walk.”

Enthusiasm was not wanting in the party after the amusements of the day. Cold punch and hot punch were the mainspring of the gentlemen's good spirits towards the close of the evening, and the ladies found all their excitement in looking at the gentlemen. The meal was convivial, and the songs sung afterwards were weighted down with vociferous choruses. But the preparations for departure in the icy air neutralized the effects of the punch, and it was the most reserved of parties that started homeward by the light of the moon. The same order was preserved in the line of march, and Olivia found herself in the rear with her usual attendants. Mr. Crawford, who had confessed to the softening influence of the moon on his disposition, seemed to find an opposing force in the baronet, and remained as hard as a rock. Sir Stanley, after having made several attempts to shake him off, settled down into gloom and resisted all conversation.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. QUIP FINDS HIS SPHERE.

To be settled in a certain condition of life is a consolation afforded only to a fortunate few. The changes incident to Canadian society, situated as it is on the borders of civilization, are capricious, and he who but yesterday found in himself the dispositions, tastes, and tendencies for one settled pursuit is to-day, by a turn of the wheel, a prey to doubt and indecision as to his fitness for anything. Social shipwrecks are not uncommon in a sea where vessels are left suddenly without helm or compass. Morning suns turn into clouds of portentous meaning, and —

“So I might go on,” observed Mr. Quip placidly to the patient who was awaiting either the arrival or convenience of Doctor Killany — “so I might go on heaping up hyperboles, oxymorons, and similar illustrations, all tending to one fact, shedding light on the same dark subject, that I am out of my sphere, pining in an uncongenial atmosphere, and, figuratively speaking, dead broke.”

There was a pause, and the patient looked up admiringly. He was one of the simple kind, who look upon everything professional as something divine; one of the kind upon whom Mr. Quip’s most outrageous pranks were played, and before whom he delighted to display his extraordinary and humorous

erudition. "I repeat," Mr. Quip went on, "that I might continue this strain of eloquence. I might build up mountains of rhetoric, valleys of thought, canals of flowing speech silvered over with the rays of reason, and do many other impossible and absurd things worthy of a Demosthenes or a Cicero, and they would not move you one-half so powerfully as the simple fact which I have stated, and which all these figures could but feebly illustrate, that I am pining out of my sphere and dead broke. The worst of it is, I know my sphere and can't get into it. But yesterday I was a man of consequence. To-day I am an exile and an orphan, wifeless, childless, moneyless, and heartless too, I believe, for such a succession of griefs must wear away that sensitive organ I never experience any feeling here," said Mr. Quip, laying his hand on his throat, "and that is the region where my heart always was before I came here; for causes of this phenomenon see an account of escaped criminals in the Michigan prison records."

The patient expressed great sympathy, and offered the consoling remark that he seemed to bear these misfortunes quite well so far as outward appearance was concerned. "Oh! I am used to it," said Mr. Quip. "I have endured it for years. I have known nothing but disappointment since my birth. Even at the first moment of my entrance into this homogeneous world I suffered the greatest disappointment that could happen to any one save a woman."

"Oh! indeed. Might I ask—"

"I was just going to tell you. The shock was severe, and I never have recovered from it, and never will. The effects of it will go down to the grave with me. I am a physical wreck, as you may see Briefly, it was my pet wish and great idea to be a female; but

fate, a cruel fate, an untoward destiny, intertered, and I was born a man."

The mere mention of this calamity brought the tears to Mr. Quip's eyes, and he turned away to conceal his emotion; but the patient, astonished and pitiful, observed him secretly to wipe away a tear.

"You can scarcely understand," he continued, "sympathetic as you are, the pain I felt at this circumstance. Time has shown me that there are greater sorrows in the world, and I have learned to bear mine with resignation. The birth of a son had a bad effect on my father. He died shortly after, anathematizing his luck, and declaring it was better to go then of his own free will into a better world than be hustled into it in his old age by a devil of a son. 'Give me a girl,' the old man said, 'and you may take every mother's son in the world in exchange.' You see my desire of being a female was hereditary. I displayed a great aptitude for music at an early age. It was said of me by a great wizard of that day that my deftness in handling *notes* and *scaling* would give me one day a high place in the world. This enigmatical language contains two musical terms. Why, when five years old I could play the hand-organ."

The patient was almost dumb with admiration.

"At five years old?" echoed he.

"At five years old," repeated Mr. Quip; and he looked the very impersonation of modest, unassuming, but injured and crushed genius.

"Wonderful!" said the patient.

"Incomprehensible!" murmured the other, with deeper emotion than before. "And yet see what I am! See how genius can be blighted and sat upon! To-day I connot sing a note or play upon so much as a jewsharp. But why speak of the disappointments of

my life? They are numerous enough and thrilling enough to be put in print, if you obtained the right kind of a man to compose the book—one of those fellows that would throw in plenty of moonlight, a little philosophy to make the thing sublime, a sunset or two, and a character showing the same amount of respectful sympathy, risible attention, and ponderous capacity for the swallowable as yourself."

"I am honored," the patient gasped.

"I know you are. I am, too. I never met any one half so agreeable. Look at my present situation. The most blinded could see my unfitness for it. It is low and disheartening, particularly so for a man who has once stood high in his profession. I am an M.D. I took out my degree years ago, but the envy and jealousy of my brother physicians have forced me to hide my head in this obscure position, sir—and I would not say this to a third individual in the world save yourself. These physicians here, Killany and Fullerton, are talented men; but if all their knowledge and experience were heaped together they would fit in the cavity over my eye, and would add but a trifle to the vast and ever-extending ocean of my knowledge. These men are good, I assure you. Trust yourself confidently in their hands. But, sir, they make mistakes. I never make mistakes, and I often rectify theirs; nor do I charge one-half so much. Bishop Leonard was here lately to consult Killany. We had a chat. I pointed out to him on the instant his complaint, and he handed me a dollar. 'Your penetration is astonishing,' said he, as he handed out the bill. Magnificent, wasn't it? His reverence has an income of ten thousand a year. You, sir, are afflicted with liver complication and inborn softness of the brain. I tell you this out of pure

friendship. You are so agreeable a fellow that I cou'd charge *you* nothing. Pray don't put your hand in your pocket. The motion is offensive to me, badly as I need money. A dollar? My dear sir, you are robbing yourself. You have not, like the Bishop, ten thousand a year. Well, since you insist, I shall accept it gratefully. Thank you. There is the bell. It is your turn Good-day."

The effective tableau of the folding-doors was repeated and the gulled one disappeared within, leaving Mr Quip in ecstacies.

Fortune did not always so smile upon him. His attempts of this kind as often brought him defeat as success, but his boldness and impudence smoothed the after difficulties and enabled him to escape detection and its consequent punishment. Much of the information showered on the individual who disappeared within the consulting-room was plain fact. Mr. Quip was an M.D., as far as diplomas could make him one, and had practised to some extent in Canada and his native country, and in the West. An unlucky and criminal blunder in the latter place had banished him finally to Canada, where bad habits and bad companionship had so reduced him from his former glory that he was quite willing to serve as a medical servant to Killany. The position was too good for him. His level was in the gutter, which he was solicitous to avoid by taking the very means surest to lead him there.

He was discontented with his position. The height of his ambition was to make unlimited money with the least possible trouble. It had been his ambition from childhood, but the opportunities had not yet been offered him. However, they were approaching. Killany was desirous of preparing the necessary evidence of

the death of the wronged heirs for Nano, and he had chosen Mr. Quip for his instrument. After office-hours of that day on which Nano had come to a momentous decision the doctor called Mr. Quip into his sanctum. He had never conferred such an honor on the gentleman before, and he was interested to observe the effect it would produce on the volatile genius. Mr. Quip would suffer no mental disturbance at even a greater event. The throne room at St. James and the presence of the court of her majesty would not have daunted him. But, with the shrewdness of his kind, he suspected the nature of the doctor's intentions, and knew that some emotion was expected from him. He entered, therefore, and sat down with the solemnity of an owl, his great eyes fixed immovably on the doctor, his mouth in fish-like repose, his manner a mixture of timidity, smothered wonder and alarm. The chair he had chosen for his seat afforded him no comfort, as he was posted directly on its edge. He seemed as if momentarily expecting an order to depart. It was a mistake to have invited him into the cathedral color and silence and dignity of a famous room. Killany was satisfied. Mr. Quip *was* awed.

"Make yourself at home, Quip," he said graciously, after a silent survey of his assistant. "We may have a long conversation, and I would like to see you at your ease."

"Wonderfully considerate," thought Quip; but he said nothing, and moved backwards an inch or so in response to the invitation to sit at his ease.

"I have a little piece of work to be done, Quip," said the doctor, clasping his slender hands over his knee, and looking with all his eyes into Mr Quip's unwinking orbs, "a delicate piece of work, requiring a man with some ingenuity, easily tickled at the sight

of gold, unmindful of risk, and in the slightest degree unscrupulous."

"I'm not the man," promptly answered Mr. Quip, "if you mean me. I confess to the ingenuity but not to the unscrupulousness. Though given to taking risks, I am not the fellow to be trapped by gold."

"Lofty sentiments!" said the doctor, unmoved by the brevity of his speech or his expressions of sterling honesty. "How would you express what I wanted to say?"

"I wouldn't express it at all, sir. Bargains of this kind are essentially dangerous to the parties concerned, more especially if it ever comes before a jury and you get into the hands of the lawyers. I am in your employ. You want something done by a nice, steady, respectable young man who wouldn't turn from the right path for worlds. I am the man, and I do it. Because of the length and importance of my services my wages are raised to a good sum, and the whole affair goes off according to the strictest principles of honesty, which is all in the terms nowadays, not in the deeds."

"I wasn't aware of it," said Killany; "but the logic is convenient. I want a man who has a firm, honest belief in the death of two children, a boy and a girl, orphans, the boy older than the girl by some years. Any two children will do, and the witness need know no more about them than that they died. But he must have a real belief, and must be ready honestly to swear to their death. Honestly, remember. Bought and studied evidence is too common and too treacherous. If you can find any one among your acquaintances possessing such knowledge—and it is quite probable you can—bring him to me; impress him with the belief that he is concerned in a most important case, where truth and fidelity to facts are so

essential as to bring some severe punishment if not adhered to. The more respectable the witness the better."

"I understand, sir," said Mr. Quip, rising, with the same solemn expression of countenance, as if to depart.

"Oh! sit down, sir, sit down," cried Killany. "I have not finished yet. There are many minor particulars to be attended to. I rely very much on you, and let it be understood that the whole business remains a secret. Not a whisper must reach others of this affair. You may use a sufficient sum of money to pay the witness for his trouble, but not to induce him to tell the truth. Clean and legal the business must be from beginning to end."

"I understand," said Quip for the second time. His owlish eyes and manner had a depth of meaning in them that would have disturbed Killany had he been other than a desperate man himself, ready for all fortunes, and not to be frightened by such men as Quip. "You need not fear my discretion in the slightest. It is always to be trusted. The job is not difficult, nor are the consequences dangerous to *me*, since I know nothing of the circumstances."

"I will make them dangerous to you," muttered the doctor, showing his teeth evilly. Quip took the expression for a smile. "You may go now, Mr. Quip. When may I expect to hear from you?"

"Not soon, sir," answered he, edging softly to the door; "yet I won't be dilatory. In the meantime I was thinking of speaking to you on the matter of my salary. I have worked well for you in the past two years, attended to minor cases, groomed your horses, and amused you in the interval. Now, if I might ask a few favors on the strength of this faithful discharge of duty."

"You may, Mr. Quip, and I shall be happy to grant

them. I never had a better servant, and your reward shall be in keeping with that declaration."

"Then, sir," said Quip, with his eyes cast down in affected humility, but really to hide their mirth and hatred, "I wish that your horses be groomed by those who have been brought up to the trade, and that my salary be raised a little. As for the amusing, I am always ready to use my humble powers for your benefit and pleasure."

Killany was outwardly calm and inwardly fierce at this insolence. Without paying attention to any other than the request for an increase of salary, he said :

"What have been your wages, Quip?"

"Twenty dollars a month and board, sir."

"It shall be fifty hereafter. You may go."

"But the grooming—"

"Forty dollars, Mr. Quip, shall be your salary. I can get others to do the grooming."

"But, doctor—"

"Every minute you remain is five dollars off your new salary. Good-morning."

Mr. Quip slipped through the door like a vanishing sunbeam, and carried his smiling face to the outer office. The rebuff his insolence had met with affected him as water does a fish. It was his natural element. He never thought of it, but was taken up with some brimstone reflections on his loss of ten dollars a month for the sake of snubbing his employer. For some time he stood at the window drawing figures on the misty glass and smiling inanely into the street. He was realizing his good fortune, slowly waking up to the fact that his salary had been doubled, and tracing in the dim future the outlines of the new pleasures which the additional resources were to bring him. He did not speculate on Killany's motives.

He knew that they were bad, and that money was at the bottom of them, and he strongly suspected the parties concerned. He felt certain that all these secrets would come in due time to his knowledge.

"I shall become indispensable to the doctor," he thought, "and in that way get first at the mysteries and then at the gold. This is the first upward mount of my fallen fortunes, and the first rung of the ladder is of gold, gold. Oh! the heavenly metal that surely is coined from the stars. A whole mine of it is open before me. I have found my long-sought for sphere, and I complain no more against destiny. Nothing to do but fascinating brain-work, nothing to avoid but the police and Killany's poisons, and in return I get treasure. What a future is before me!"

Mr. Quip in his exultation performed a dance through the room, noiseless and wild, with savage gestures and grimaces, looking the while like a vulture. When he had grown calm he sat down in a study for some minutes. Killany passed out during his meditation, and favored him with a cold, forbidding smile; but Quip did not see him, and went on with his thinking, of which the apparent result was a note directed to Mr. W. Juniper, Insane Asylum, City, and written as follows:

"To-morrow night the circle meets at the old rooms. Cash is plentiful, and a general attendance expected. Don't miss the fun, my Juniper, as you love and regard Quip.

"P.S. The change in your circumstances, from the dissecting-room to the asylum, from stupidity to insanity, has made no change in my affections. Q."

This epistle being written and dispatched, Mr. Quip, perched on his study chair, seized a medical book in his claws, eyed the letters for a few minutes gravely, and finally fell asleep in a most studious attitude.

CHAPTER XII.

A BAND OF REVELLERS.

The evening mentioned in the note sent by Mr. Quip to his familiar, Juniper, was ushered in gusty and wild. The day had been one of severe cold and high winds, and the night threatened to be even more disagreeable. The snow lay deep in the streets, and the wind caught it up in powdery masses, and flung it against the buildings and in the faces of those who had ventured to brave the fury of the storm. It was piled high on the roadways, and left the unfrequented lanes open to the travellers that never thought of passing through. The plate glass windows of the rich gleamed cheery defiance at the storm, which fretted its snowy pinions against them. The rags and papers of the poor offered only the show of resistance to the enemy. Where it was not wanted it came with a rush and a roar, as if sure of a welcome, creeping through chinks and crevices with noiseless feet, staring in its ghostly silence at the misery which alone perforce would greet it. The wealthy looked at its deadly beautiful face from the protection of a luxurious fireside. The pauper shook it with a dreary smile from his pillow and his coverlet, and laughed to see how boldly it lay on the cold fingers which should have melted its treacherous life away. Around the lamps at the corners the flakes sported like white-winged beetles, and the light falling on the crystals seemed to create for itself

a new medium and shone with weird splendor. Where the great buildings formed a barrier against the wind, and with their lights opened a pathway through the darkness, it was pleasant enough to walk and to watch the hurrying and listen to the voices of the tempest; but in the more retired streets it was severe labor to make headway against the drifts, the wind, and the blinding snow. The blackness was Egyptian, and the eyes were of little service.

Mr. Quip and Mr. Juniper, who had responded promptly to his friend's invitation, were breasting the wind and the night in one of the streets of the West End. The violence of the storm did not seem to abate with the advancing hours, and forward movement was such desperate work that neither gentleman was in the humor for talking. Mr. Juniper was, moreover, in a mood. He was displeased with the situation, with his companion for bringing him into it, with the wretched inclinations which were strong enough to force him from warmth and comfort and safety into the misery and actual danger of the night. He was very superstitious and imaginative, and every moan of the tempest struck new terror into his heart. Every unaccountable noise startled him. He was glad to walk with his eyes shut and his hand on Quip's arm, and he grumbled for mere sake of the companionship which Quip, stalking along gravely and silently as a crane, seemed disinclined to show.

"And only for what's coming," said he, stopping with his back to the wind, that he might breathe easily for a few minutes before starting out again, "only that I want to see how the men who helped to spend my money can spend their own, I wouldn't think twice about getting back to the asylum."

"Your taste for whiskey has more to do with your

coming than anything else," observed Quip sneeringly.

"I learned that from you," retorted the other. "But as yet I haven't the nose for smelling it out which you have, nor your impudence for drinking it at the expense of my neighbor. Hold on! Don't start yet. Let us rest alongside this railing, for I can't stand this wind-choking any longer."

"Don't forget the antidotes, Billy. Cheer up, my lad, and forward. There is but one block more."

"Hold on, I say! I'm going to rest if I were a the very door," Juniper yelled sullenly. "*You* can face the wind, for you're not even breathing hard."

"There's a reason for it, Juniper, as there is, I suppose, for the existence of a great many things in this world. I haven't said one word to your twenty in the last hour."

Juniper did not at once reply. They had braced themselves against the railing, and, freed from the persecution of the wind, could talk more freely and hear more distinctly. A dull roar from the lower end of the street had struck upon Juniper's ear. It was a solemn, steady sound, sometimes lower, sometimes higher than the crash of the storm, and it impressed him unpleasantly. He was silent from awe.

"What noise is that?" he asked after a pause.

"The devil of the storm shouting his orders, I suppose," Quip answered in a tone purposely serious and broken. "If he is anywhere in the city, he is in this street now. It is a terrible place, Billy."

"In what way, Jack?"

His voice was become tremulous. The mysterious sounds of the night, the darkness, the neighborhood, which Mr. Quip's solemn manner and words had sud-

denly invested with a painful interest, had set him shivering. Before replying Mr. Quip looked impressively up and down the street. Very little of its real character was visible, but what could be seen was most ill-favored. The houses were for the most part low rookeries inclined at every possible angle, and threatening the lives of the dwellers and passers-by. Shutters, when they hung anywhere, were never closed, but rattled and creaked and banged incessantly. So little of glass was left in the windows, and so many opaque substances had supplied its place, that lights could be seen only at long intervals, the feeble glimmer of a poor fire or a poorer candle indicating the poverty of those within.

"In the wickedest way, Billy," said Mr. Quip, after a pause sufficiently long to allow of his former remark making a due impression on Juniper's heated imagination. "If a mark were put upon every house in this street where a murder had been done, not one would escape save this we are standing by. Crime lurks everywhere. That house opposite is a shelter for every criminal in the city while the officers are after him. Look at that fellow stealing out now. Night, and such a night as this, is the only time he would dare to venture forth. Perhaps he is stained with blood or with a lesser crime. The lake is below us, and an old wharf lies there. It has not been used for years except by the unfortunate who looks for rest in the waters under it. Sometimes a girl is found floating there with her hair twisted around the rotten beams; sometimes a poor fellow with his head battered in. I was there myself one morning after a meeting. It was four o'clock, and there was a heavy fog out. I saw the harbor police busy about something, and I went down to look on. They were drag-

ging out a poor devil, stiff and water-soaked. I can see him yet with his fingers clutching at nothing, and his eyes full of the slime of the lake. It beat the dissecting-room, I tell you."

They resumed their way in silence, and arrived before a building which by daylight must have presented a more respectable though not less neglected appearance than any on this famous street. It stood far back from the road, had a high, dilapidated fence running close to the sidewalk, and presented the general appearance of an old, decayed family mansion. The gate was cunningly fixed in the high fence and opened outward. Mr. Quip opened it, and they entered at once upon a snow-hidden pathway, thickly covered over with trees and vines, which led up to a side entrance. Another key admitted them into the lower halls, where a few lamps burned with light sufficient to enable them to find their way in safety. A new stairway to the upper story had replaced the old, and they mounted quickly, passing along the hall until they reached a door at the extreme end. From the moment of their entrance the sound of voices, mingled with uproarious bursts of laughter, singing, and the clinking of glasses, had reached their ears. From the room before which they now stood these noises came. They had an animating effect on Mr. Juniper. His cheeks glowed, his breath labored as if he were still buffeting the wind. As with every forward step the uproar became more distinct and more musical, his excitement became more uncontrollable, and at last he burst into the room with a shout that silenced the revel in an instant.

Before it could be resumed a voice cried out:

“The symposiarch.”

And the assembly, numbering twenty young men

of various ages, rose respectfully, and, with a clinking of glasses and a rattling of bottles, cried out :

“ The symposiarch.”

Mr. Quip moved majestically to a seat at the head of the table around which the company was gathered.

“ I am late this evening, gentlemen,” he said. “ It is not my intention to make any excuses, but our friend Juniper became so conscience-stricken on the way that I was compelled to halt for a time and dose him with moral philosophy. It belongs to you to finish what I began. Continue the revels.”

The symposiarch, waving his hand authoritatively, sat down, and on the strength of his permission the Babel commenced with renewed vigor. Mr. Juniper, who was admitted into the assembly because of his former standing as a medical student—for such each gentleman professed himself to be—was surrounded at once by a fun loving crowd, and severely cross-examined as to his scruples of conscience and his life at the asylum.

The room was filled with smoke, and the outlines of objects could be seen but dimly. The apartment was large, and in its glory might have had about it considerable magnificence. The walls were panelled, and carved with great taste and skill. The ceiling, darkened by time, neglect, and ill usage was of valuable wood, and the floor and old fashioned furniture seemed to be of similar material. The students, who had rented the place as a society room for the carrying on their orgies undisturbed by the police or by exacting boarding-house mistresses, had disturbed nothing that was fit for use; and when the air was clear and the sun let shine through the windows a suspicion of old-time refinement, and grace and mystery hung about its faded walls.

Mr. Quip enjoyed a distinction among the com-

pany that was quite enviable. He owed it to his unsurpassed impudence and his apparently open-hearted generosity. For Mr. Quip spent money with the freedom of a millionaire, and never dreamed of a return. We have seen how he compensated himself in a few instances. His real character was unknown to the individuals over whom he presided. It might not have mattered much if they had known. Many of them could not lay claim to better deeds or dispositions, and were secretly indebted to the symposiarch for advice, useful sympathy, and trifling money loans. Mr. Quip might be trusted to make good use of the influence which he had thus obtained. He was politic but not backward in using it. He was always the friend, the consoler, the injured party. Juniper was perhaps the only individual besides Dr. Killany who had a clear insight into the man's character. But Juniper was looked upon as a fool, and the book was never closed for him. He had not sense enough, in Quip's sarcastic opinion, to make anything out of the printed page. If he had, thought the symposiarch, sipping his punch lazily, he would not be here to-night; or being here, he would drink less whiskey and keep himself ready for danger.

“Roseleigh,” he said suddenly to a pleasant young fellow who sat beside him, “come to the other side of the room. I want to talk with you.”

“You must keep an eye on Juniper,” he said when they were out of hearing of the others, “and not let him drink too much. See that he drinks enough to loosen his tongue, for I must get some information out of him, which is my reason for bringing him here to-night. He's so close a fool that if he suspects what I am after, drunk or not, he won't open his lips to-night. You understand?”

"Perfectly," replied the genial Roseleigh, whose readiness to obey the chief arose from the fact of his slight indebtedness to Quip. "Trust me to manage him."

A whisper in Mr. Juniper's ear brought the gentleman, after a short struggle with the tipsy students, to the symposiarch's side.

"You are drinking too much," said Roseleigh. "The boys are filling you purposely, and wish to lay you out along with themselves. I heard them plotting the thing."

"They are a little too late," laughed Juniper, with his eyes fixed rather curiously on Quip. "You saved me in the nick of time, for I would have gone on until the jug had been finished."

Mr. Quip paid no attention to his friend. He resumed the conversation which seemed to have been interrupted by Juniper's appearance. He was giving a detailed account of his adventures in other climes than Canada, with a view to excite in Mr. Juniper's breast a desire to excel them by the relation of his own. It was a bait that took easily. The symposiarch's deeds of old were brilliant in themselves and excellent in the telling, but they were of a kind which might happen to any Bohemian. There was no mystery about them, nothing of the indefinable charm which leaves the listener so many questions to be asked with no possibility of a satisfactory answer. In this respect Mr. Juniper had the advantage. He was reputed a fine story-teller, and never lost an occasion of adding to his laurels. His faculties were now misty with unlimited punch, and he was nettled at a certain air of conceit which the volatile Mr. Quip purposely displayed.

"I know a tale worth twenty such as you have been telling," he said after Quip had finished.

The bird-like eyes snapped with delight.

"The old thing you always drag out on big occasions," said he contemptuously. "It's like fire-crackers on the queen's birthday, and as old as Roseleigh's hat. Couldn't you vary it, Juniper, in some unexpected way? Bring the children to life; have them discover the man that cheated them; let the girl fall in love with him, marry him, and so keep the fortune in the family and one man out of jail—couldn't you do that, Juniper?"

"Yes, I could and shall, if I choose," answered the other sulkily.

"Then I command you to begin," said Quip, with the air of one who expected to laugh heartily for the next ten minutes. Juniper was more nettled than ever.

"Let the boys gather round," he said; but Quip objected:

"I had no such audience, and they are too tipsy to listen."

The story, therefore, went on without the boys. Roseleigh and one or two more sober fellows formed the group of listeners, and displayed an attention as flattering to Mr. Juniper's vain soul as the assumed indifference of Quip was galling. By degrees, however, the symposiarch's manner awakened into interest. His eyes began to glisten. He moved himself into an easier position and nearer Juniper, the better to hear every word. Not a movement was lost on Juniper. He drank in slowly the triumph that seemed so insensibly offered him, and exerted himself to throw all the charm of a stirring romance about the adventures of two children who had fallen with their fortune into the hands of a faithless guardian. When the narrator arrived at the point where he usually de-

scribed the death of the wronged orphans, Quip cried out with a snarl of triumph :

“ And the children died.”

“ No, they didn’t,” answered the victorious Juniper, with an expression of countenance quite indescribable. “ They lived, they grew up to be man and woman, and they will yet meet with the man who injured them and give him his deserts.”

“ Not dead!” growled the symposiarch profanely. “ The devil ! ”

Mr. Quip remembered himself immediately, and became silent. But later, when the whole party had turned their attention to the jug, he drew Juniper aside.

“ Were in you earnest,” he asked, “ when you said that those children were living ? ”

“ What does it matter to you, Quip, you infernal schemer ? Have you another plot hatching to poison some innocent ? ”

“ Take care, my boy,” cried the symposiarch, with a tone that made the other tremble. “ I wouldn’t think twice of spilling you over the old wharf to-night on our way home. You know too many secrets for your own good.”

“ I beg your pardon,” meekly replied the offender. “ It was unintentional.”

“ I can understand that it was,” sneered Quip. “ But it may not always be so harmless. Were you in earnest, I say, when you asserted those children to be living ? ”

“ I was, and be hanged to you ! You get no more information out of me.”

“ It isn’t wanted. I only wish to inform you that by this new ending to an old story you have lost a cool hundred dollars or more.”

Mr. Juniper stared.

"The explanation is" continued Quip, "that not long ago I was commissioned to find a man who could swear to the death of any two children, provided that they were a boy and a girl, orphans, whose parentage could not be easily traced, and were of such an age as to have been twenty nine and twenty two respectively had they lived to this day. It was to be a perfectly fair and honest transaction. No perjury, everything legal. There was nothing to be done but declare before a lady, or perhaps before a court, the death of these two children, and for so simple a service you would have received any sum from one to ten hundred dollars. I had heard this story of yours before, and thought to benefit you and save myself trouble by giving you the chance. I suspected that you lied in your former version. I brought you here to muddle your head and nettle you into telling the truth. You have done so. You have lost a great opportunity and I have earned additional labor. So much for not sticking to a good solid lie when once you get hold of it."

There was too much sincerity in the symposiarch's manner for Juniper to doubt the truth of his words, and the resulting grief at his ill-fortune found comical expression in the gentleman's face.

"One to ten hundred," he muttered. "We can always make asses of ourselves."

"You are a shining illustration of your own remark," snapped Quip, who was really annoyed.

"Suppose," ventured Juniper, after a long and thoughtful silence, "I should be willing to swear to the death of these two children, no matter what the facts might be?"

"Simply impossible," answered Quip, with a grim smile. "It is probable that if the case came before a

ccurt—which does not now seem likely—the career of those children would be traced up to the last degree of certainty. Jail for very respectable people would result. No, no. We want facts; and as you haven't got them, the opportunity is forever lost to you."

Mr. Juniper's avarice once excited, he was not to be put off by decision of manner or emphatic language. He began, therefore, a maudlin assault on Mr. Quip's heart, with a view to weakening his resolution. The symposiarch remained inexorable, and at last pretended to dismiss the matter altogether.

"I am sorry to see you so cut up over it," he said, "and I won't object to doing you this much of a favor: If I fail to find any one who has the requisite knowledge of facts, and if we must come down to perjury, I shall call upon you. I know I am running a risk but I have run risks before. It will be worth more than your life to you to dream of ever going back on me."

Juniper's protestations of undying secrecy and rock-like faithfulness fell unheeded on Quip's ears.

"I never thought your foolish soul could be bought so cheaply," was his inward and sneering comment as he walked to a seat at the table.

The hilarity of the early part of the evening had yielded to a more than Dutch gravity among the students who sat round the council-table. A few had surrendered themselves to the demon of sleep, and were musically engaged under the table. The others, staring with watery and uncertain eyes through the smoky atmosphere, babbled and laughed to their companions, and sang snatches of drinking-songs with funeral solemnity. It was near four o'clock and Quip made preparations for immediate departure.

Some prescribed ceremonies were gone through with. Roseleigh, standing up, murmured thickly:

“The symposiarch.”

And all the gentlemen, following suit with some difficulty, clinked their glasses and responded:

“The symposiarch.”

The effort of assuming a standing position was more successful for many than the attempt to sit in the same seats again, and as the symposiarch and his henchman left the room most of the convives found their way to the chorus under the table.

The night had grown calmer. The winds were silent, and a ragged rent in the clouds had given liberty to a few stars to twinkle coldly in the frosty air. Juniper shivered when the unceasing roar of the lake reached his ears. It would have a disagreeable association for him in the future. He could not help thinking of a white face and clinging hair down among the rotten beams of the old wharf.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EVENING RECEPTION.

During the month of February McDonell's convalescence was slow but assured. The muscles of the arms and legs gradually resumed their old tension, and he could drag himself about feebly and make a pretence of attending again to his business, going at long intervals to the office, consulting with partners, business men, and customers, directing a little, resting much, and persuading himself that by degrees he would become able to resume all the old duties, with the provision that younger and healthier men be permitted to do the greater part of the labor attached to them. A new idea, born of his earlier crime and his recent illness, had

seized upon him. The ideas that visited him during and since his illness were of a stubborn, crotchety, and even foolish nature. As Killany said, paralysis had not affected his muscles alone. He had become feeble-minded. Fretfulness and peevishness were now his distinguishing qualities, though, with the memory of what he had once been still strong in his recollection, he strove bitterly and eagerly to maintain the dignity and calmness of perfect physical health. The business blunders which he had already begun to make were of a higher significance to the outer world and to his associates than he dreamed, and aspiring clerks smiled knowingly, and experienced partners and friends shook their heads gravely and doubtfully, when the leader's latest mishaps were mentioned. The new idea was as fanciful as could be imagined. He determined to hunt up the heirs whom he had defrauded, make the young man his secretary, and prepare him gradually for the sudden descent of good fortune. It was probable that he was good-looking and intelligent, if he at all resembled his parents; and it was possible, too, that a marriage between him and Nano might take place. The minor obstacles in the way of his design never intruded themselves on his meditations. The young man might be in the other world, or engaged in a profession which he was decidedly unwilling to leave, or a not very good character, or already married. Mr. McDonell never gave these difficulties the slightest thought, but proceeded straight to the accomplishment of his end. Nano, in the meantime, had passed through every stage of mental agony that a woman so gifted, unfortunate, and sensitive could suffer. A kind of repose—the repose of exhaustion—had been given to her from the fatal day on which her resolution to hold the property at

almost any cost had been taken. Her conscience seemed at rest, but it was only the torpor of an opiate. Under it lay hidden the pain of the dumb beast, so bitter from its want of expression—a deadly ache that never ceased day or night, in pleasure or pain. The sight of Olivia, the sound of her voice, the glance of her eye, the touch of her hand—avoided when possible—the mere remembrance of the fairy innocent, tore her heart with anguish. That she should be so pure in her poverty, and herself so vile in her wealth! The appearance of her father, his mournful helplessness and senility, his need of the gentle and unceasing care of a daughter, smote her with grief. Every hour she compared her own actions and dispositions with those which Olivia would surely have displayed in the same circumstances, and every hour derived fresh humiliation from the comparison. Yet her resolution was never recalled. She went on in quiet and unexpressed misery, wondering if still greater agony were in store for her. Her fair manner told nothing of the inner-pain. Her pallor was greater, but was attributed to the close confinement of the sick-room, and the deeper melancholy in the expression of her eyes added too much to the beauty of her face to be commented upon unfavorably.

Her father having recovered sufficiently to render the sick-room superfluous, her thoughts turned once more to that society which she so scorned for its shallowness, so loved for the honor and deference it paid her, and from whose pleasures she had been separated for more than a month. The McDonell mansion was the centre of the winter in-door festivities, and was besides the Mecca of the Canadian transcendentalists, whither they turned their faces weekly to worship at the shrine, to pour out libations of tea

or Burgundy, to read and comment on the Koran, the *Novum Organum*, or the Bible, and to exchange the latest sweets discovered in the literary bouquets of the high-priest, Emerson. Miss McDonell was the priestess. Her beauty and her wealth were the chief text upon which the cultured disciples descanted. Their cry was, "Great is the religion of humanity, and Miss McDonell is its Canadian prophet," and they went on their knees to the prophet, offered their incense, drank her tea and her Burgundy, and went away only to have the pleasure of coming again to sacrifice. The sudden illness of the master of the house put an end to festivity. Transcendentalism languished while the shrine remained closed. Society's stream found a temporary channel, and flowed on less smoothly, perhaps, but none the less surely and indifferently. Culture, however, stood at the gates disconsolate. It writhed a little at sight of a priest entering where it was forbidden to go, and raged when that familiarity which was denied to it was offered freely to the upholders of the oldest superstition of modern times. Its principles forced it to be silent.

There was a general waking of all parties when the cards for the first reception at McDonell House began to circulate in their plain, sober envelopes among the privileged of the city. Mrs. Strachan, happening to call on Olivia the morning after the invitations had been issued, gave expression to the public sentiment in her vigorous style.

"Are you going, Miss Olivia?" said she.

"Of course," the sprightly young lady answered. "How could I stay away? *Her* receptions are so delightful!"

"It takes but a short time to find that out," said the general.

"I have attended receptions and receptions, and have been jammed, crushed, heated, flattered, and slandered to my heart's content; but the model for such an entertainment is at Miss McDonell's. It is like a poem, the harmony and smoothness of everything. After all, I believe very much in culture, so far as it does not conflict with settled doctrines."

"And I believe in it so far as it does not conflict with common sense, which it offends against quite as often as against religion. But do you know, Mrs. Strachan, I am in a nervous state over my dress, and I want you to look at it. I submitted it to Harry. But these awkward men never know the nice points of a costume. If you ask them to look at your train, and tell how it hangs, they will look at your eyes and answer, 'Like stars, to be sure.'"

"They couldn't say much else," said the general good-humoredly; "and you will admit that the gentlemen have great taste in those matters."

"But not always correct, Mrs. Strachan."

"So says Mr. Strachan when he comments on his taste in marrying me. But come, you are going to show me the dress."

They went off to the wardrobe.

The evening of the reception found Olivia paying her respects to Nano. The company assembled was large and distinguished, as at all Miss McDonell's gatherings, but the house was roomy and the usual crowding was avoided. English faces predominated, and English uniforms—for it was in the time of the military occupation—gave a tone and a brilliancy to the affair which the same gatherings do not now enjoy. Music and singing floated from one room, the clinking of glasses from another, the shrill but subdued tones of warm, polite argument from a third. In

the drawing-room, where Nano held state, transcendentalism reigned supreme. Its disciples were a fine-looking body, but it was easy to see from their manner towards the mistress whence their inspiration was derived.

“You will come back to me, dear,” said Nano, after Olivia and she had exchanged the customary greetings. “There will be some conversation on your favorite topics. I am not in the humor for conversation this evening, and you may take my place. Besides, my little firebrand, it will be to the advantage of every one to hear your vigorous attacks on culture.”

“I do not like it,” answered the firebrand promptly. I am sick, too, with seeing what fools people can make of themselves when they have put down God and put themselves up in his place—little calves of clay, not having even the merit of being gold.”

“Now you may go,” said Nano severely, yet detaining her with her hand. “You are more than ill-humored, and it would not do to have you heard by my friends. Calves of clay! To think we should receive such a title!”

“If I am going, do let me go,” said Olivia, “and pray that I may not return. I see that you must have here over twenty of your school. I did not suppose one city could muster so many.”

“Indeed! We are increasing every day.”

“I can believe it—among the rich! You need receptions, and bric-à-brac collections, and expensive editions to keep your poor souls together. If it were to tramp to Mass of mornings at six o’clock, and confess your numerous peccadilloes three times a year —ah! but I must preserve the discussion for your friends.”

She fluttered away by an opposite door. Nano followed her with her eyes, sighing. Had she but a heart like that, so content, so cheerful, so loving, so pure! She pressed back her vain regrets and turned to the company, next to herself the idol which she most honored and worshipped. For their good opinion, their esteem and adulation, she had sacrificed her soul, and she would exact her price to the last farthing.

Meanwhile Olivia, having fled in a hurry, rushed tumultuously into the midst of a party of gentlemen so deeply engaged in a political discussion that her intrusion was unnoticed. Killany sat near the window, talking in his slow, dulcet tones, and around were McDonell, pale and peevish, the bishop with his humble self-assurance, Sir John with his perennial smile and Disraelian nose, and two other gentlemen of no appearance whatever. Sir John, who was evidently awaiting a chance to withdraw from the circle, or to change the conversation, was the first to catch sight of the young lady, and he rose gallantly and somewhat eagerly to bring her forward. This won for her the attention of the company.

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen,” she said with a blush and a smile, and the pretty boldness of a privileged miss. “I thought the room was vacant.”

“And so it shall be for you, Miss Walsingham—”

“Fullerton, Sir John.”

“Ah! to be sure—my poor memory, you understand—so it shall be for you, Miss Fullerton, if you desire it. Your lordship, permit me—”

“We are already acquainted,” said the bishop, smiling.

“Dr. Killany—”

“I have the same honor,” curtly observed the doctor, bowing.

“Mr. McDonell—”

“No need of introductions at all, Sir John,” cried the peevish invalid. “Miss Fullerton is better known than yourself, and, what is more, can give a straightforward opinion on this question of Canadian policy with regard to the United States.”

“Um!” said Sir John aloud. It was non-committal. His thoughts, translated into speech, were:

“The devil himself seems at work to force an admission of some kind from me to-night.”

“We were just discussing,” the bishop courteously explained to the new disputant, “the advantages and disadvantages of annexation to the United States.”

“And its probability,” put in McDonell.

“And its political significance,” said Sir John beamingly. He had to say something, for Olivia was looking at him inquiringly, and he brought out in consequence the most sounding and senseless remark he could manufacture.

“And all having given their opinions on these points,” said the bishop,—

(“Sir John coming out strong on the political significance,” muttered McDonell scornfully)

—“will it be asking too much of you, Miss Fullerton, that you give an opinion also? These gentlemen will receive it with the veneration of the knights of old, and defend it as the truth against the world.”

“Oh gentlemen,” answered the maiden, still blushing, “you do me too great an honor. I own that I am interested in these questions, and that I think a little and read a little about them. But it does not become me to put upon you such an obligation as you propose, or even to speak where those who have made a study of these things have spoken.”

"Modestly and truthfully said," observed Sir John with some enthusiasm.

"But if you will receive my proposition, I appoint Sir John, our representative Canadian, to speak my sentiments, and I shall adhere to the doctrines he utters."

"There's the difficulty," broke in McDonell abruptly. "You will have nothing to adhere to. For since we began let me be hanged if our representative Canadian has given one tangible opinion on the question. Speak for yourself, young lady; there will be at least sincerity in what you say."

Olivia looked in surprise at her appointed champion. The bishop was smiling, and Killany had retired to cough at the far end of the room. The other gentlemen, with the exception of McDonell, seemed to be suffering from some emotion. Sir John alone was serene as a summer sky, although a glint in his eyes argued the existence of a predicament.

"Miss Fullerton," said he persuasively, "please do not regard the utterances of the gentleman, or attach to them the importance they would have if our friend were in perfect health. In appointing me as your spokesman you honor me, and I am grateful. But I must ask you first to speak, and then you shall have a representative opinion from me—one, too, that gallantry, and patriotism, and sincerity shall be patrons of, I can assure you."

This was evidently fair and emphatic. So unequivocal a declaration from the attorney-general seemed to create considerable interest among the gentlemen, and they closed around in various attitudes of attention.

"Yet before I venture to be so bold," said Olivia, "I should like to hear what has been said by each of the disputants on the subject."

The priest was about to take upon himself the reply when McDonell sharply interrupted :

“ To do that would take some hours, Miss Fullerton, for all of them, with the exception of Killany, perhaps, were as verbose as you could desire. Sir John managed to say nothing in a great many words. His opinion amounts to this : if the weathercock people swing one way, so will he ; if they swing another, so will he.”

“ Mr. McDonell !” said the knight reproachfully.

“ His lordship,” continued the invalid, “ who has spent most of his life in the United States, and was born in Ireland, attempted, with the genius of a cosmopolitan, to take the question from an Irish, an American, a Canadian, and a papal point of view ; but they all so flatly contradicted one another that he ended by leaving the solution to the future. A pretty hole to crawl out of, upon my word !

“ Killany, in spite of his English birth, being an out-and out American sympathizer, said that the attention of Americans had not yet been directed to the annexation of Canada—in the face of '76 and 1812 he said that, Miss Fullerton—and he added that thinkers like himself were decidedly averse to it. It would be to the advantage of neither country : not to the United States, which would become altogether too unwieldy for management ; and not to Canada, which would suffer in losing her nationality.”

“ I said annex, looking at it from a commercial point of view, and these gentlemen agreed with me. There's a synopsis of an hour's conversation, and you can see just how much sincerity there must have been in what we said. Now, my dear, give us a plain, square, patriotic, sensible opinion, and, as his reverence has remarked, we will hold to it, for to-night at least, through thick and thin.”

"I always feel too deeply on Canadian subjects," said Olivia, "to give what you hard, money-getting men of the world would call a sensible opinion. I love Canada, and I hate her enemies. For that reason alone I am opposed to annexation."

"And you consider, Miss Fullerton, that the United States is a menace to your country?" said Killany.

"Certainly. And not only to us but to the other countries of the continent. Her citizens seem to aim at nothing less than the dominion of the New World. She considers it an honor to the state which she forces into her abominable Union."

"Abominable," muttered McDonell. "Twaddle!"

"Abominable!" cried Sir John. "Miss Fullerton!" And it was hard to say whether he meant his words to be of encouragement or reproof.

"It is not often," said Killany, for once in a virtuous mood, "that we hear that word applied to a political system which is the admiration of the world."

"Well, gentlemen," laughed Olivia, with a sweetness and indifference that astonished herself, so fierce was she apt to become in argument, "you have asked for my opinion, and you have it. Make the most of it. And now shall we hear from you, Sir John?"

"By all means," cried several together.

"You are very, very warm and somewhat poetical," said the politician, with a most flattering smile beaming from his countenance. "But you are not far from the truth in many things, and your clever foresight does you great credit. So few of our young ladies *think* nowadays. But in questions of this nature, Miss Fullerton, the element of patriotism, while holding a deservedly high place, must suffer itself to be guided by prudence and by sound policy, and must often submit to force of circumstances. Our Canada

is a growing country, but as yet disunited, young, and weak. Our neighbor is powerful, wealthy, united. It would be mere foolishness to irritate her by empty display. But in the future what may not happen? All that your ardent young mind has conjured up in its dreams may be more than realized. I congratulate you on your knowledge of Canada's needs, and I thank you for the honor you have done me."

"There," said McDonell, with a triumphant snarl, "how do you like that as a specimen of sincerity, gallantry, and patriotism? It is of the purest political quality, warranted to stand the wear and tear of a campaign, and to hold its color in spite of the washing it may receive at the hands of opponents. It is of the color which washing least affects—white. If we were annexed to-morrow you couldn't twist one of those sentences into hostility against the American government. If we were to leap at a bound into greatness Sir John would be the observed of observers, as the man whose rhetorical and far-reaching mind foresaw and foretold it one evening at a reception."

"You are severe to-night, Mr. McDonell," said the bishop in mild reproof. "I consider that Sir John has been very explicit—"

"From what point of view, your reverence?" growled Diogenes. "From the Papal, American, etc.?"

"Let us say from all. He has subscribed to the doctrine put forth by Miss Fullerton, and is become an opponent of annexation, and by consequence a believer in our future independence."

"Will you say amen to that, Sir John?"

Olivia had been disappointed at the knight's reply. She felt that it was not open or candid; that he had said nothing about annexation, and that what he had

said was not in accordance with her high conception of Sir John's character. She hoped he would accept this opportunity of retrieving himself. Her knowledge of the ways of statesmanship was primitive, and she knew nothing of the little filthinesses in which constitutional and popular rulers almost unavoidably indulge.

"These gentlemen are becoming facetious," was all the attorney-general could be brought to say. "Let us leave them, Miss Fullerton. I hear music in a distant room. I am fond of it. Will you guide me to the temple of the Muse?"

There was nothing left but to retire. They went away amid the smiles of the company, and Olivia knew that they were laughing at her simplicity. McDonell laughed in his hard, peevish, snarling fashion.

"Bishop Leonard," said he, "you can yet learn a thing or two from Sir John. It is a neat trick to be able to hold some twenty or thirty different opinions on the same subject and present a new one to every comer. But it is risky. Give me the man who can talk eternally and yet express no views at all. An ass does it naturally, I know. In a man like Sir John it is the perfection of art."

Olivia made it her duty to slip away from the knight at the earliest opportunity. Having met with the general, who had been looking for her a long time, she foisted the politician adroitly upon her, and so checkmated the good lady. Then she went looking for a quiet spot wherein to rest for a minute. She was feverish, disappointed, and aching with regrets only half understood. The late conversation had disgusted her a little, and she wondered if the patriotism her mind had conceived as belonging to the true lover of his country was anything more than a creature of

her own imagination. Evidently it was not compatible with the idiosyncrasies of an attorney-general.

She was out of humor, but made the most of circumstances by falling asleep on an inviting lounge. The sound of voices in the next room awoke her a few minutes afterward. Two persons seemed to be the talkers, and she speedily recognized the tones of Mrs. Strachan and Killany.

“Impossible!” the general was saying in astonished accents.

“Mere fact.” Killany answered. “It is known to very few besides myself. Father and mother they never had lawfully. They have hidden their base birth under the title of orphans, and so sought the favor and pity of the world. It is a base imposition on society.”

“It must be seen to,” said the general slowly, and Olivia knew by the tone of her voice that she was still doubtful as to the truth of what she had heard, yet did not wish directly to question Killany’s veracity.

“He is a slanderer, too,” thought Olivia, rising to return to the company. “When will the true character of this man be known? What poor unfortunate has fallen under his displeasure now? Yet Nano tolerates him because he is useful. In what way? Can it be in anything good, I wonder?”

She rejected this last thought with indignation, and chided herself severely for thinking even inadvertently so poorly of her friend. When she reached the parlors once more the general seized upon her and carried her off to the music-room.

“For you have left that sweet voice of yours shamefully alone,” said the general, “and have not made a single effort to amuse any one this evening.”

Before they arrived at the music-room Sir Stanley,

who must have been lurking somewhere in the vicinity, was taken under the general's protection. There were few persons in the room when they entered, and the piano was silent. Dr. Fullerton sat alone at a table looking over some engravings. His face was grave as usual, but sadder, and his attention seemed anywhere save on the pictures.

"Look at him," whispered Olivia to the baronet when the general went off to hunt up some music. "He is in love, Sir Stanley, and believes it to be hopeless. He has moped like that the whole evening, stealing into the presence of his charmer, and stealing out again, guiltily; afraid to go, and dreading to stay, in her presence. And he wears her photograph next his heart."

"And who is the favored one, Olivia?" asked the baronet with real interest.

"Who but the divinest of her sex, the glorious Nano?"

"Not quite the divinest," said the amorous baronet, with another of his effective and meaning looks. "But I am very glad to hear it. They are made for each other, and he will be her salvation."

"My very thought," said Olivia rapturously.

"Two souls with but a single—"

"Sir Stanley, you may turn the music," interrupted the general. "Your musical talent has been developed enough for that office I trust."

"My cool-headedness you mean," returned the baronet.

"Or cold-heartedness," said the general. "I will engage that you are not often disturbed by the sound of a voice or the glamour of blue eyes."

"Only in one particular instance, Mrs. Strachan. Come, Olivia."

When she had finished her song Dr. Fullerton came over to the piano with gentle reproach in his looks.

"Where have you kept yourself during the greater part of the evening, Olivia?" he asked. "We looked for you everywhere in vain."

"Not everywhere nor vainly," answered she. "I must have been somewhere, and I have rewarded your search with a very fine song. Sir John played the gallant for me a few minutes, and I do believe I fell asleep afterwards in a little room at the other end of the hall. The sound of Mrs. Strachan's voice woke me, or I would have slept until the evening was over."

Before any remarks could be made the general, with a smiling face, drew the young lady away from the gentlemen altogether, and went with her to another part of the room.

"Did you hear any of the conversation that passed between Killany and me, Olivia?" she asked, with a searching glance into the girl's face.

"A few words," replied Olivia, with a scornful curl of her lips. "Enough only to confirm the opinion I always had of Killany. He was slandering, then, in his mean, dark way, some innocent people."

Mrs. Strachan seemed disconcerted and troubled for a moment, and she kept her eyes fixed peculiarly on Olivia's face.

"He was speaking of you and of your brother," said she, calmly.

A deadly paleness overspread Olivia's countenance. She had to struggle with herself severely before daring to speak.

"Of me and of my brother he dared to say *that*?" she gasped, and her blue eyes looked up with the fear of a startled bird in their depths. "Oh! can hatred of the innocent go so far?"

A silence of some minutes intervened. The general was regarding her compassionately, and sternly, too, the very impersonation of society.

"You are waiting for an answer of some kind," said Olivia at last, "but I am not the one to give it to you. I never knew my father and my mother, but my brother did, and he can refute the calumny, no doubt, and punish the calumniator. How Killany, whom we never knew until we met him in Toronto, should presume to know so much of our affairs is strange. He hates me, and would injure me if he could. But he has gone too far for once. This will cost him more than he dreams of."

Her significant glance at the doctor gave the general infinite satisfaction. Mrs. Strachan had no faith in Killany, and was consequently disinclined to believe him in any respect. Yet, unless he was a low villain of the elegant cut throat type, he would scarcely venture on so daring an attempt to injure the fair fame of the Fullertons. It behooved her to move cautiously in the matter, and not commit herself precisely to either side. Her sympathy was with Olivia.

"I understand you, my dear," said the lady, "and I think I understand Killany. I advise you to say nothing to your brother of this just now, as it might lead to bloodshed. Young men are hot, and such a report as this is sure to kill one party or the other. Look quietly for proof sufficient to put the lie on this upstart, and then, having the lash in one hand and the knowledge of his guilt in the other; you will not spare him, nor will I, you may feel certain. Now let us return to the gentlemen."

"Thank you ever so much," said the grateful, distressed girl. "Your confidence is consoling, and I

shall work harder to satisfy you than to satisfy the world."

"Very proper," murmured the acute old lady, whose present sympathy, like Sir John's opinion on annexation, was very doubtfully expressed and meant absolutely nothing.

"I wish to go home," was Olivia's first remark to her brother. "I am tired and ill."

"Brief and commanding," said he good-humoredly. "Let us go, then, to make our farewells to Miss McDonell."

"So soon?" observed that lady, reproachfully. "Why, Dr. Fullerton, I have not had the pleasure of exchanging words with you this evening. I was in hopes that my friends would have the honor of hearing you demolish some of their pretty theories. Olivia tells me you are a great reader and admirer of the fathers."

"So I happen to be," the gentleman gravely answered. "I regret that Olivia's indisposition makes it necessary for us to go."

"Are you really ill?" Nano said, "or is it only an affection of the heart?" she added in a whisper.

"Sick unto death," answered Olivia, with a smothered sob. "I have been stabbed to night, and in a mortal part, by one who is called a gentleman. You shall hear all by and by. Good-night, Nano. Oh! good-night,"

And the brother and sister went away smiling. The hostess smiled, too, as pleasantly as they, while all three held the most aching hearts that ever beat in human breasts.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEIRS ARE DEAD.

Killany was not the most ingenious of plotters, nor, considering the experience which his adventurous life had given him, the shrewdest and coolest of men. Likes and dislikes were rapidly formed in his bosom—shoals which the true Bohemian ever avoids—and he gave them cunning but ready expression. Where they interfered with prudence, prudence often got the worst of it. His natural clear-headedness often yielded to passion. Even his own interests were occasionally injured by inane attempts to gratify the desire of revenge. Something of the honorable dispositions of earlier years still lingered in him. He had still the instincts of the gentleman, and years of criminal association had not wholly destroyed them. He could not pocket insult or contempt always, although his training and his interest urgently insisted. It was to his interest that Olivia should not be made an open enemy. Her influence with Nano was powerful and dangerous, yet not impossible to be destroyed. A little patience, a little scheming, and the thing was done. Better and closer friends than she and Miss McDonell were parted every day by easily-manufactured causes. But Olivia's silent and undisguised contempt for him stung him into retaliation, and, to add to the bitterness of his vengeance, there was the newly-risen fear of a rival in the handsome, virtuous Dr. Fullerton. He scarcely waited to

reckon consequences. He felt assured that the Fullertons would find it difficult to stand against a shower of well directed calumnies. Their poverty, their pride, their slight acquaintance in the city would dishearten them. By one hasty act he arrayed against himself the doctor, Sir Stanley, and probably Nano ; and should the matter be investigated closely, and the charge proved false and traced to him, society's doors would be shut against him. These probabilities, in the heat of his passion, he looked on with disdain. They were not likely to happen. His cunning was of too high an order to permit him to be discovered by means of his own footsteps. The condition of his affairs by that time would be so materially changed that if he were discovered he could afford to snap his fingers at his enemies. Moreover, he had a strong and well-grounded suspicion that the Fullertons knew very little of father or mother. They never spoke of them, never seemed to have relatives or influential friends, and were reticent on their early life. It was just possible that in secretly undermining their good name he had struck upon the secret of their lives, the skeleton of their closet ; and if his good fortune really so favored him he was well rid of them forever. Carrying the war into Africa Dr. Killany called this movement, but it did not promise to succeed quite as well as the expedition which gave rise to the saying.

He had skilfully entangled Nano in the meshes of his schemes, and was drawing her more and more, as the days passed, towards the evil act of which they were the preparation. Even here he had not acted with great tact, although his judgment was unquestionably good. He was so confident of his thorough understanding of Nano's character that he was often led into blunders in her regard surprising enough to

himself when he examined them afterwards. Her attachment to good and hatred of what was radically evil still puzzled him. He thought he knew the strength of her instincts, but it had not entered into his mind that she would be willing to surrender her fortune, or its greater part to strangers without a struggle. Her firmness on this point, however, had necessitated the fiction of the death of the heirs. She had seized upon this door of escape eagerly. Much as she distrusted Killany, it never occurred to her that, interested as he was in the affair, the thing might be a clever invention. His own conduct was strangely mysterious. The idea had not come to him as a last resort. It had formed part of the original plan of action, and had suggested to the scheming doctor the newer and more practical idea of settling the question to his own satisfaction, whatever story he determined to offer to Miss McDonell. The fact of the death of the children was most important to those who expected to have any share in the McDonell estate. If they lived it was best to know their whereabouts, for accidents might make them acquainted with their rights and set them to making inquiries. If they were dead no more was to be said about them. It was necessary that the fact should be known in either case; yet Killany took no steps in that direction. Dead, the heirs could do him no harm; living, the danger was too remote to cause him fear, or even uneasiness. The necessity of the hour was uppermost with him, and he spent his time and his energies in building an elaborate case, strengthened with forged documents and backed by the testimonies of Quip and Juniper. To Mr. Quip he had entrusted the task of finding so much about the children as would assist him in mak-

ing out the required documents; and the gentleman not only did all that his master commanded, but, going further out of pure curiosity, developed some startling complications of the game which Killany was playing. Moreover, their importance can be suspected when it is known that Mr. Quip said no more to his master and did no more for him than he had been hired to do, and that the possession of his newly-discovered facts left him in a stupid condition for days afterwards.

Killany was not ready with his papers and witnesses on the day appointed, nor for many days, and Nano was too proud to ask him the reason, too cautious to show any great interest in the proceedings. He delayed the examination partly from policy, partly from necessity. The work of preparing printed documents and forged letters, of harmonizing the whole scheme so thoroughly that she could by no means suspect the trick, and of coaching the witnesses, was not so easy as he had imagined, and Mr. Quip, who was general superintendent, fought hard for additional time in order to perfect his own secret plans, and lied with a success and pertinacity that actually disarmed his master. Killany wished also to make Nano more eager and more irritable. It nettled him to see how well she kept up the *rôle* of indifferent observer, and how powerless he was to pull from her face the mask of icy composure. It was imperative, too, that the impression of McDonell's madness should seize so well upon the minds of outsiders as to float back to her by a thousand little channels. She would then be prepared for the violent measure of her father's incarceration, and would feel that the act was justifiable when supported by the suffrages of her friends. He had been careful to spread with all the

cunning at his command, the report of McDonell's failing intellect. He had been more successful in concealing his own share in the matter than in doing the same in the later scandal of the Fullertons. Society was surprised one morning to find itself talking quite naturally of the fact and commenting on the possible consequences. Where it began was not known and could not be discovered. Like an insidious internal disease it had crept upon them; the whole system was attacked, and it became impossible to discover the causes. Society accepted it unhesitatingly when every one talked of it, and came with the conventional tears, hints, and hidden sarcasms, to sympathize with the lady who was to suffer. Nano first perceived it, not understanding, on the night of the reception, in the looks, half-pitying, half-prophetic, cast at her father, in the mysteriously-worded assurances of esteem and sympathy from her friends and acquaintances, more than all in the irascible manner and eccentric behavior of the merchant himself.

A strange affection for him had sprung up in her heart since his illness. It was unreasonable, she thought, and it annoyed her that it came at a time when the old indifference would have been so acceptable. Every real or fancied slight on him would have only stirred her pride before as an indirect insult to herself. Now it pierced her with physical pain and filled her eyes with tears. He was old and feeble. He needed her, his child, in his weakness. He preferred her before the world and his wealth in the going down to the tomb. And she was to be harsher to him than a stranger. Under the appearance of necessity she was to put him in bonds, for caresses give him blows, and for affection, hatred. She could not

have treated her enemy worse. A sea of bitterness surged over her heart.

"Let them mock at him," she thought remorsefully; "all they can do or say will not weigh the weight of a hair against the mountain of my ingratitude."

With so many influences for good tugging at her will it might have appeared strange that she trod so resolutely the path leading down to crime. Her own instincts, her education, were utterly opposed to the course she was pursuing. Her newly-born love for her father, her affection and admiration for Olivia, the incipient liking for Dr. Fullerton, the utter detestation of Killany, were so many chains which bound her to virtue, and they were hard to be broken. Yet her Mephistopheles was never absent from her side, and, when her resolutions for good were about to be taken, put forward in more startling colors the losses she was certain to sustain, and assured her that her sin would have no influence on her faithful friends. Downward with the tide she drifted, and the voice of the tempter would not let her thoughts rest for a moment on the desolate ocean waiting to receive her into its bosom.

A clear sky, with a cloud in it no bigger than a man's hand, looked down upon the daring sailor in Bohemian seas—Killany. As he planned, so went everything. McDonell was mad, or nearly so, the world said; Olivia probably so occupied with her own troubles as to need all her sympathy for herself; and Nano was at the point of desperation. With an eye to dramatic effect Killany introduced his witnesses and his forgeries at this juncture. He came in on the afternoon of the day succeeding the reception, with a bundle in his hand.

"Your patience is to be rewarded to-day," he said smiling in his aggravating fashion. "I must thank you for your forbearance. I am ready to prove to you that the children of whom we have so often spoken are really dead."

"I am interested," she answered briefly, and waited with her eyes fixed on his face, until it should be his pleasure to begin.

"As you have been already made acquainted with the leading facts in the history of these children," said Killany, "I shall deal only with the circumstance which is of highest and immediate interest to you—their death. After it pleased your father to accept the office of guardian for the children of his friend, and to make away with the fortune which had been left to them, he put the little Hamiltons in American and Canadian schools, and left them there until they had yielded to the adverse destiny which meets so many neglected orphans. The boy died in his college, the girl in her convent, within a few weeks of each other's death. Your father, of course, paid all the expenses of their funeral, but took good care that neither the children nor their superiors should ever know the apparent relative or benefactor. Here are the documents in proof of what I have said."

He opened the bundle of papers which he carried and passed them over to her one by one. They were a cleverly-connected series of forgeries, consisting of letters, declarations, and newspaper notices. The letters and declarations were from the superiors of the college and convent in which the children had resided, from the doctors who attended them in their illness, and from strangers who had been interested in the orphans. The notices were slips from the papers of the neighborhood and time, describing or mentioning

the death and funeral. In a court of law they would not have been worth the value of a pin, but to the lady for whom they were intended they had the strength and validity of sworn testimony. She read them in silence carefully, raising her eyes stealthily at times to note the expression of his face. She did not dream of deception. She was wondering only what wages he expected for his work, since he was not a man to give his services in so important a matter gratuitously. When she had finished he said:

“I have brought one witness, or rather two, who can throw more light on the affair—a Mr. Juniper, whose mother was acquainted with the Hamiltons during their stay in New York, who remembers to have seen the children, and who attended the boy’s funeral some years afterwards. The other is Mr. Quip, my assistant. He collected most of the evidence which you now see before you. Would you wish to see them?”

“By all means,” she answered. “It does not make so great a difference, perhaps, but I shall not have to accuse myself of negligence in this affair hereafter.”

The servant was ordered to conduct Messrs. Quip and Juniper from the waiting-room below to the lady’s apartment. The two worthies had been awaiting in much bad humor the invitation to ascend. Juniper was restless and shaky, not concerning the falsehoods he was to swear to but the compensation he was to receive. Mr. Quip, cool and indifferent as usual, had endeavored to excite Juniper’s gratitude to the pitch of presenting him with ten per cent. of the promised reward. When that gentleman refused to be grateful Mr. Quip declared his intention of forcing him into the proper state of feeling.

“Ten per cent. is my price,” said he decidedly,

"and you may thank your stars that I let you off so easily. If I chose to take fifty, couldn't I do it? If I chose to take all, couldn't I do it? Why be so unreasonable as to grumble at a very reasonable proceeding?"

And he began to examine the parlor, removing such ornaments as were not likely to be missed and could be safely stowed in his vest pocket, Mr. Juniper grumbling the while, but unobservant of his comrade's doings. The servant came to summon them to Nano's presence.

"I'll not go," said Juniper with gloomy determination. "Ten per cent. is too much. I'll see Killany."

"Ten per cent.," answered Quip promptly, "is too little. I take fifteen now, and for every minute you hang back I add five to my first demand. If it reaches one hundred, Juniper, I'll do the job myself."

In so far as real emotional insanity was concerned, there was but a slight difference between the asylum-keeper and his crazy wards. He glared at the impassive Quip, and was stung to fiercer anger by his smiling indifference.

"Ten per cent. you can have, money-shaver and poi—"

Quip's hand flew to Juniper's mouth in time to break off the utterance of the odious word, and his fingers tightened on his throat with deadly vehemence.

"For the last time, Juniper," he hissed. "If you ever utter it again I will not hesitate to do for you what I did for that other. Come, you cowardly dog! come."

The keeper became silent and lamb-like, and followed him from the room. The servant had gone on ahead. Nano was not at all impressed by the personal appearance of the witnessess. Quip's villainy and

cunning shone in every line of his countenance and in every motion of his lithe, crooked body. Juniper's coarseness and vulgarity spoke quite as distinctly and obtrusively. It was hard to distinguish whether greater disgust was aroused by Quip's cool impudence or Juniper's vile cringing in the presence of Killany and Miss McDonell.

"You will tell this lady, Mr. Quip," said Killany, "the history of the investigations which these papers represent." And he pointed to the documents scattered over the table.

Mr. Quip plunged into explanations with great earnestness, and told his tale with an elaborate elegance that surprised his hearers. He was at home in spinning out to a gullible audience a well-connected, highly flavored, and important lie. He dwelt on particulars, and rushed into description of scenery with the ardor of a novelist. He could not, however, resist his old habit of poking fun at his hearers; but as on the present occasion they never dreamed of so much impudence on his part, he was left to enjoy the laugh alone. Mr. Juniper followed, when he had done, and spoke bashfully but explicitly on what he knew of the children. It was even more satisfactory than the testimony of the documents.

"I was intimate with young Hamilton," he said, in accordance with Mr. Quip's instructions, "and called on him at the college quite often. He stayed sometimes at my mother's house for a few days, and once in a long time his sister, a little baby-girl, very pretty and loving, was sent down to see him. He was very much cut up when she died, and, being a delicate lad himself, it told on him somewhat. He died a month afterwards of fever. They buried him in the graveyard there, and put a stone over his grave. You

can see it at any time. It is a good many years since then, but the graveyard is kept in tiptop repair and the stone is still standing."

"Did you ever see the gentleman," asked Nano, "who provided for those children?"

"But once, I think, ma'am, and my recollection on that point is not very clear. I do not remember his name or his face. My mother may know that."

"That will do," said the lady, and the physician motioned them from the room.

There was silence for a long time. Nano was thinking with considerable relief of the death of the heirs, and indulging, since she could safely do so, in a womanly pity for their mournful fate. She had nothing to say to the doctor. He had done his duty. He had removed a light obstacle from her path and placed a heavier—himself—in the way. She was anxious for him to depart, wondering as before when he would ask compensation for his labors, and of what nature would be his demands. Killany, however, had much to say, and was quite determined to remain until it was said, if she did not imperatively dismiss him.

"You are satisfied?" he asked.

"Quite satisfied, doctor, and infinitely obliged to you. I may retain those papers?"

"By all means. But I would like to know if this examination has not removed some of your scruples against the measures I advised some time ago."

"I may say frankly they have not. I scarcely thought of the question since, save to wonder if what you asserted were really true."

And there she hesitated, and seemed undecided to speak further, for he was looking at her with sharp eyes, as if waiting to pick up the first wrongly-chosen word.

"I hoped," she continued, when he did not speak, "and I do hope still, that when these facts have been presented to my father—"

"I beg pardon for interrupting you," he said, laying one hand impressively on her arm, "but that hope is foolish. Your father has wrestled with the same idea for years, and it has not shown him a way out of the difficulty nor offered any solution of the question. The deep-rooted and fiendish superstitions of his creed have such power over him that nothing you can say will move him from his determination to give the property to the poor. The eternal safety of his soul rests on that act, he believes, and he is too shrewd a business man, and too sincerely frightened by his present health, to leave to you a few thousand dollars at the cost of his eternal happiness. If it were to drive you into disgraceful and absolute poverty, he would do this thing and rejoice that he had done it. He is becoming more irritable and uncertain. His business has suffered some not trifling losses by his late blundering, and men shake their heads and wonder that he is permitted to go on in this way. Some of his eccentricities you have seen with your own eyes. The opportunity of ending the miserable uncertainty in which you live is now before you. Seize it while you may, for a reaction may come and what is now a work of charity may be made a crime."

"I understand," she answered, her coldness increasing in direct opposition to his warmth and earnestness. "But I must think, and I would prefer to be alone. You shall know my resolve shortly."

He rose with polite and deferential haste. Her manner was unmistakable, and he flattered himself that he knew her moods.

"As you wish, Miss McDonell. You understand

the crisis that has arrived in your affairs, and will decide as you ought, I feel certain ; only remembering that some despatch is required. Good-day."

He went away directly, and she fell into one of her day-dreams over the nearness of the danger and her contemplated crime. The overwhelming sadness and disgust that follow upon the fall of the virtuous had lately become her portion. When alone and undisturbed it gathered around her like a thick, poisonous atmosphere. It colored her thoughts, sleeping or waking, with a bloody hue, and her resistance to it filled her with despair and overcame her with physical weakness, as in the case of one who struggles madly with a nothing. Still, her resolution was not weakened by her distress. Some time this terrible deed must be done. She was putting it off until the last moment. She was resolved to strike the blow, and could not put her hand to the weapon. Under the pressure of so much doubt and dread her life was becoming a martyrdom, and her cheeks grew pale and her eyes heavy, despite the strongest efforts of her indomitable will. Her meditations lasted for hours, and to-night the stars, her loved stars, were looking in through the familiar window on her reclining form, and reflecting themselves in her upturned eyes, before she was aware that night had fallen.

"Madam," a servant said from the door, "your father requests your presence in the library."

CHAPTER XV.

A THANKLESS CHILD.

Humiliations were in store for McDonell. He was weighted down with wearisome remorse through the weeks that followed his strange turning away from God ; fretted and fumed over the evil he had strength to do in earlier days, and was now too weak to turn into good ; raged against his daughter that she was not little minded and ignorant and ugly, as one whom change of fortune could not affect from pure inability to understand the change ; and wore himself out in a variety of ways, all more or less dangerous to his delicate state of health. He scarcely knew the meaning or the pleasure of a refreshing sleep. A pale-faced man and woman cried in his dreams for justice to their children. Two orphans screamed in his ears for the wealth which they had lost. His daughter, wan and entreating, besought him with tears not to leave her in poverty. When he awoke in terror, and found it was but a disagreeable dream, he raged for an hour in the helpless, idiotic fashion of an old man and an invalid, and dared not go to bed again.

“Poverty,” he would mutter, wiping the cold sweat from his brow—“poverty be hanged! Wailing and screeching not to be left poor, when her income will never be lower than twelve thousand a year! There’s an idea of poverty for you! As if her income, like her majesty’s, footed up to so many hundreds a day,

and was coming down to so many units! Eighteen thousand is not a sum to be dropped to a stranger without blinking, to be sure, but what is it compared to a man's peace of mind, his night's sleep, and—and—I may as well say it, though I don't want to—and the safety of his soul? I can't get over the look of the priest posing as Nemesis indeed! What won't a man dream? And I wouldn't endure it again for a fortune. Poverty! Pooh! Twelve thousand a year poverty? I'll send for the priest to-morrow and settle the matter for ever. Let her screech for the money. I'll not be pestered to death for the sake of paltry dollars."

He would sleep peacefully after this good resolution, but still did not dare to return to bed. His invalid-chair was comfortable enough, however, and saved him a repetition of his ugly dreams, and the morning looked in on him cheery and determined as a man could be. But night-thoughts are foolish creatures when dragged into the light of day. Like the players of the stage, they are all grace, lightness, beauty, under the glare of the footlights; the sun has no mercy on them, and shows their hideous paint, and faded velvets, and paste diamonds with shining impartiality. Resolutions made in the silence of the night are much of the same nature as the mists which gather on a river. They disappear with the sun: and so it was with McDonell's. The evaporation was complete. He did not send for the priest nor inform his daughter, but went about restless, melancholy, and snappish, biting everyone that came in his way, raising many a laugh at his eccentricities, and playing more and more into his enemies' hands.

He had forgotten his famous idea of making the boy

whom he had defrauded his secretary and son-in-law. The difficulties which he should have foreseen at first occurred to him in the course of time and daunted him. He was fickle and uncertain in his resolves and plans. He thought of many schemes and rejected them as fast as they presented themselves ; but they served the purpose of diverting his mind from himself until despondency followed. So slowly was he recovering from his illness, so easily was he put back a degree on the way to moderate health, so severe an effect had the slightest depression of spirits on his system, that he was at last compelled to think seriously of taking Nano into his confidence. Night and sleep were the terrors of his existence, for the diseased fancy was never idle. His dreams were become more frightful, his resolutions more numerous, and the breaking of these a thing of shameful frequency. He saw no way out of his misery, and one evening, in a fit of despair, commanded his daughter's appearance in the library with the intention of revealing to her the nature of the situation. She came immediately and found him in a wild condition of feeling, torn by conflicting emotions, but firmly determined to dare all in this moment. It shook his resolution somewhat to look upon her royal beauty and manner, and to think how much of its outward adornment, how much of its inward vain satisfactions, he was to take away by a single stroke of his pen ; and then his mind, reverting to the income she would possess, always forgetful and excited now, he blurted out :

“ Pish ! Who would call that poverty ? ”

She was taking her seat when he uttered these words, and as a glimpse of their true significance flashed upon her mental sight a slight pallor over-

spread her face, her lips trembled, and she put out her hands in a blind way, as if trying to grasp something. He saw it and wondered; but she grew calm immediately, and spoke so sweetly that he thought no more of it and prepared to open his disagreeable story. His troubled face, the paper in his hand, the expression he had just used, forced upon her the belief that the hour of trial was at last come; and, half conscious of the scene about to take place, she prepared herself, with desperate and pitiful calmness, to act her part to the very letter. Undecided she might be at other times, but in the presence of the temptation she was ever on the tempter's side.

"I have a very painful and humiliating confession to make to you, Nano," he began, "and at the same time I must make you acquainted with a misfortune which will soon be yours and will require all your fortitude to meet. Before I begin my sad story let me ask pardon of you that to the neglect of years I must add a finishing touch in depriving you of a great part of the only favors which I ever bestowed on you—I mean your wealth and social standing."

"I beg of you, sir," she said, with a coolness that astonished but did not reassure him, "to come to the substance at once. Are we ruined and beggars?"

"No, not so bad as that," he replied, much relieved; "but circumstances have lately occurred which make it necessary that I should surrender part of my estate in justice to others. It is the greater part, Nano, but it will not leave you poor. You will not be compelled to leave the circle to which you belong, but your fortune will be diminished by more than one-half."

"I am at a loss to understand, sir, how this can be."

"I have written it here." And he handed her the paper which he was nervously fingering. "I could not summon resolution enough to relate with my own lips the disgrace which I have brought upon your name. But it was only just that you should know my reasons for acting as I am to act."

She took the paper and read the confession, while he watched her with eager eyes, dreading, yet submissive to what might follow. She already knew the pitiful story, but she was anxious to see how far the circumstances agreed with Killany's tale. They were precisely the same.

"Well?" said her father when she handed back the paper to him in silence.

"I cannot yet understand," was her quiet reply, and it struck chilly on his heart, "what possible effect this can have on our fortunes, unless the children are alive."

"You do not understand?" he gasped in astonishment. "Nano, you do not understand that we cannot retain what belongs to another, and, though we have used it as our own for years, we are bound to make restitution."

"Are the heirs alive?" she asked.

"It matters nothing," he answered quickly. "If they are not alive to receive their own, it goes to the poor. I cannot escape restitution in that way."

"And you would give the wealth which for twenty years you have guarded, increased, and grown gray and paralytic over to the beggars in the street, or to the priest whose debts demand such windfalls; and you would leave me, your daughter, with diminished income, to be laughed at by the vulgar rich rabble of the city. Father, are you dreaming, or are you mad?"

"I wish it were one or the other," he said in a feeble way, "that I might wake to know it was not my daughter who uttered those words. My honesty was brittle enough, God knows, but it had life. Yours seems dead. And still I forget, poor girl, that you have been bred a pagan, and what can *you* know of honor or justice as the Christian knows it?"

He bowed his head in his hands like one stunned, and Killany's words, "She would barter her soul to retain this wealth," seemed burned into his brain. Her emotion was not less severe, but her determination was invincible. She had begun the hideous drama, and would play it to the end.

"Do not excite yourself, sir," she said, "over a phantasy. But it is as well for you to know that I will not submit to any such disposal of your property. It is yours to do with as you please, but I shall make strong opposition, and, if the world says rightly, I shall be successful."

He lifted his head, and looked at her with a face more haggard than when he had lain on his sick-bed. His command of words and his pronunciation were not of the best since his illness, and in times of excitement these defects became more apparent. His voice was thick now as he sternly said:

"What do you mean, woman? Do you dare to threaten your father?"

"I beg your pardon. I meant no more than what I said," she answered as calmly as before.

"Then know," he cried in a passion, bringing one hand down on the table with a violence that set the papers dancing, "that every cent of this money shall go to those to whom it belonged. By the heavens above, girl! if you are not honest from choice, you shall be so from necessity. I am master yet."

"I do not dispute it, and let me beg of you to lower your tones, father. The servants have ears, and, if they allow a little for your condition, it is possible to say too much."

"For my condition?" he muttered suspiciously.
"What is there in my condition to allow for?"

She hesitated. Was it necessary to add to his suffering by informing him of the slanders which circulated concerning him in the world? She was very hard with him, and she felt as if she could be harder and more cruel yet.

"The world says of you, sir, that you are mad, or fast becoming so. Business men are afraid to deal with you, since every act of yours may be called in question hereafter. And this paper"—she picked up the confession and laid it on the coals of the grate—"would probably be of as much value in a court as the ashes into which it has turned. Judge, then, of the manner in which this story would be received by the world, and, if you are wise, put it aside for ever."

It was not a pleasant fact even for her to tell or for him to receive, and the manner of his receiving it was harder yet to bear unmoved. His face grew stony and whiter, and his lips were set, his eyes glaring, and his whole manner one of horror. He held out his hands towards her. If the world treated him harshly she was his only refuge, and she had feared this appeal.

"Do *you* believe it?" he moaned. "O Nano! do *you* believe it?"

"I do not wish to. But after so strange, so improbable a confession as you have made to night, and the mad scheme of restitution which you have planned, my faith is considerably shaken. Say it is all a mistake, father"—and she put one hand on his

arm, and looked into his face with an expression so hard to resist—"say it is a blunder, a mere freak of your fancy, and I shall believe without doubting in your sanity."

He looked down coldly but blankly into her face.

"So the devil would look," he muttered, "when tempting me to sin. I could not do that, Nano; I could not do what you ask, for then to myself I would be worse than mad. Ah!" with sudden, fierce recollection shaking off her hand, "I have been nursing a viper all these years, and now it stings me into madness. It was hard enough to withstand temptation as I did in the last few weeks, but there was a triumph in resisting until Satan took your shape, Nano. O God! it is your turn now."

"You are mad, I believe," she said curtly.

He did not answer, but remained staring silently into the fire.

"Paralysis was nothing to this," he muttered to himself, and every word pierced her like a knife, "and hell could not be much worse. These shrunken, maimed limbs and this thickened tongue have been made so for her sake, and now—"

He turned and faced her without finishing the sentence. "Listen," he said. "I have been told that you do not believe in God or in the existence of a soul. Had I done my duty to God and you, you would have believed otherwise. As it is, hear and remember these facts, and profit by the lessons they contain.

"I was brought up in the Catholic 'superstition,' and I left it, not from conviction, but from the love of wealth, and power, and high standing in the world.

"I had been a good, pure, honest man while I remained true to my own principles. I knew and felt and

relished the responsibilities of a husband, a father, and a Christian. But the moment I deserted those principles—and they are embodied in the Catholic faith—I forgot everything but the gold which I worshipped.

“I allowed your mother to live a cheerless, un-wisely life, to die a peevish, sin-laden, despairing woman, who, not enjoying life, still had no hope in death.

“I robbed my friend and his helpless children.

“I left my daughter to the care of religious hybrids, who brought her up according to the maxims of all the blasphemous fools that ever prosed under the cloak of humanity, wisdom, and truth.

“Now mark my punishment.

“When I would undo a part of the evil which I had done the world calls me mad. I wish to return to my church, to purchase my eternal safety with the world’s gold and the heart’s repentance, and lo! my daughter turns upon me, and weighs the eternal happiness of the man who gave her life with the pitiful opinions of her pet society acquaintances. The education which I gave to myself I have unwittingly given to her, and the results, I suppose, will be the same. I have sinned in my love of gold, and so will you. This is my punishment—to be accounted mad. Will it, too, be yours?

“Now, on your principles, Miss McDonell, atheist, freethinker, judge of God in his motives and actions, how do you account for all these chances?”

“On the strength of your madness, sir,” she answered, trembling; “for if you were not mad before you are at this moment.”

“Mad—yes, forever mad,” he said, putting his hands to his forehead. “And Killany was right after

all. Well, you are a finely-matched pair. You will put me in the asylum yet."

"I have nothing in common with that man. He is here by your permission, and not to my pleasure."

"Then let him go, in God's name, and do you follow as speedily as you may."

She rose and walked to the door.

"You will forget this rash idea of restitution, father. You are rapidly recovering from your illness, and such excitement as you have endured this evening does you only injury."

"Yes, I was excited," he answered dreamily. "Oh! I must have been. Come here, Nano."

He took her hands when she stood by his side, and looked with an old man's beseeching helplessness into her eyes.

"Does the world really say that I am mad, Nano?"

"It does," she answered with not hypocritical gentleness, for her heart was very sore indeed.

"And, Nano, do you think that I am mad?"

"I would not hesitate in saying no, father, but for what has happened to-night. Were you in true and solid earnest?"

"I should be mad indeed if I said otherwise. But O my child! be kind and straightforward with me as I have not been with you. If the world turns against me I have but one refuge on earth. There is another Whom I have betrayed and dare not look up to until I have done right and atoned. Nano, I am dying. My days are numbered, and will you not help to make my last hours easy for me? You will be alone when I am dead. You have no relatives, and I pray you that as you would wish to die in the arms of those who love you, so to let me die."

"And so you shall, father," she said, kissing his forehead ; "only forget to-night."

"Ah! away with you," he almost shrieked, flinging her from him with a violence that was terrible to see. "You are not my child, but a foul, unnatural thing, caring more for my gold than for me! A thief, if you could and dared! Out, out! I say."

She went away calmly enough, though her face was white from the indignity which he had put upon her, a woman.

McDonell raised his hands to heaven in silent invocation.

"It is done at last, and thank God!" he said. "I shall send for the priest to-morrow and make the final arrangements. My sorrows are ending, but hers are beginning, and Heaven alone knows where they will end."

The bell rang for dinner, but neither father nor daughter came to the table. McDonell was busy arranging his papers, and Nano, worn and disgusted, eaten up by remorse, anguish, and despair, yet more than ever determined to hold on to the property, walked the length of her room in sad meditation, vainly endeavoring to devise some less violent means than the asylum for quieting her father.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SLANDERER.

Killany called the morning after the library scene, and found awaiting him a woman of a far different temper than he expected. He had left her in doubt the preceding evening ; she was all determination to-day, and related what had taken place with a frankness, a vivacity and earnestness she had not shown him for an indefinite period. It puzzled him still more,

however, in her regard. He feared that her manner was forced and intended to deceive. He had allowed her a certain time in which to come to the mark, and she had anticipated him. He was not a man who liked to change his rule of action for every incidental exception, no matter how severely they injured the substance of the rule; and in this again he was not a Bohemian. He had tested by long experience the efficacy, strength and correctness of his methods. He had found, too, that if adherence to them in all cases sometimes brought about losses, departure from them had in several instances brought about greater losses. He listened to her tale, and observed her changed manner with considerable of disquiet and unexpressed suspicion.

“And now,” said Nano, in concluding her story, “the time has come for action, yet I am at a loss what to do. At any moment he may make over this property to the priest, for he was so angered by my opposition that he seemed prepared for any rashness.”

“You must put him under guard at once,” Killany answered, proposing the bold scheme more with a view of testing her sincerity than with the expectation of having it accepted. “His letters and messages must be intercepted and visitors excluded. The time is ripe, for the world, and even his own household are persuaded of his insanity.”

The faintest pallor came into her lips, and she flushed slightly afterwards; but conscious of Killany’s sharp gaze, she became immediately calm again.

“You mean to have him guarded here?”

“Yes.”

“But do not forget that the admission of strangers would excite his suspicion.”

"There is no necessity for strangers. His valet will make an excellent keeper, for the fellow is frightened enough at the reports of your father's insanity. He will keep out visitors, and hand you all letters entrusted to him. I will advise, as his physician, that your father remain in absolute retirement for a few days. If he suspects what is occurring, and becomes violent, then more stringent measures must be taken. A few days' time will one or two outbursts of rage will be enough to give him the manner of a madman. The physicians may do the rest."

"You are too bold," she said coldly. "I have not yet consented to these violences."

"Then this first violence is totally unnecessary," he replied decisively, "if you do not intend to go further. All is over if you hesitate for a moment. Once he discovers his position, you must either release him or put him in perpetual confinement. Let the first happen and you will never be able to put him in safety; for his friends will gather round, and easily destroy, by determined opposition, the present impression of his madness. There is no medium, Miss Mc Donell, and the alternative is the loss of your property."

She could not but feel the truth of his words, and if she pretended to doubt and consider it was merely to gather strength and outward composure for the shameful consent she was about to give this man. Before him she wished never to betray the faintest emotion. Hitherto she had looked upon him and his plottings with feigned indifference, and this he had borne with patiently, hopeful for such a moment of triumph and compensation as she was now compelled to offer. Henceforth she must appear in the *rôle* of his co-conspirator, and the bitter humiliation of such an alliance was forcing her proud heart to the dust.

"Do as you wish," she said at last, with affected carelessness, "and let there be no bungling."

"That I can promise you," he said, lowering his eyes to conceal the wicked joy that shone there. "I have not yet made any blunders. You may trust me."

After some further but important conversation he left.

Olivia called in the course of the day with the news of a skating-carnival to take place the next evening. The little lady was not as brilliant as usual, and there was a suspicion of heaviness in the eyes that ever sparkled cheerily. For the first time in her life a real sorrow had come upon her, and the young heart felt the suffering keenly. With the silent, enduring courage of a woman, counselled by Mrs. Strachan, whom Killany had so unluckily fallen upon as the greatest gossip he knew, sustained by the fear of consequences to her brother if the story went abroad, she went on her way as before, carrying a smiling face and a gay manner to hide her sorrow. If she was sad, however, Nano made up for it in the forced gayety which she assumed. Ordinarily cold and reserved, remorse thawed her into cheerfulness. Olivia sat puzzled and overwhelmed at this new side to her friend's character, listening to her rapid and wandering speeches, and mystified by the slightly-flushed cheeks and burning eyes. A chill struck upon her heart, for she could not reconcile this phenomenon with true peace of conscience.

"And there is to be a carnival," said she, "and you are anxious that I should go with your party? Of course I shall be happy. Sir Stanley is excellent company, and your brother, although perhaps a trifle grave, can talk metaphysics and transcendentalism. I know one thing that will please you: Killany will not

be there. He is pressed with business and cannot come."

"It makes but little difference," Olivia answered, with a lump sticking in her throat. "I choke when his name is mentioned or when in his presence. He cannot do me more harm present than absent, and I am sure he will do as much as is possible in any place. And now, leaving all disagreeable subjects aside, what are you going to wear? Something cultured, unintelligible, pagan, I am sure."

"Diana is to be my *rôle*: black velvet and gold trimmings; moon-and-star crown; bow and quiver of arrows over my shoulder."

"That is better than to appear as an Indian goddess with an unpronounceable name—a veritable what-is-it, comprehensible only by the elect of culture. I am going as a Swedish girl in a winter costume. Sir Stanley is anxious to find out what I shall wear. The foolish fellow would actually array himself in a corresponding habit, if he knew."

"Which would be quite proper, and no doubt he will discover it. It will not make a great difference."

"I suppose not," Olivia said meditatively, and with another throat spasm.

Something in her face recalled to Nano the evening of the reception.

"Ah!" she suddenly exclaimed, "how could I have forgotten it?"

"Forgotten what?"

"The night you went home so distressed from the reception. Do you remember what you said to me? I have thought of it so often since, and it has worried me unaccountably."

"I should not have spoken as I did," Olivia said

hastily. "Something did happen, but I must ask you to wait a little before I tell you."

"I will wait just five minutes. You have grown thin and pale in a few days, and have lost some of your old cheerfulness. Child, I ought to know the cause of this trouble, since it happened within my walls."

"There is no present need of your knowing, Nano. I could not open my lips now even if I wished ; but believe me, you shall hear all in good time."

Her embarrassment was so painful that Nano forbore to press her further, and the conversation turned to other subjects. When leaving, Olivia offered, according to custom, her hand and cheek to her friend ; but, to her surprise and grief, Nano managed to reject both in the gentlest and cleverest manner.

"I have offended her by my reserve," she thought sadly, as she went down the stairs ; and being very sick at heart, and overweighted with the burden of her own sorrow, this new bitterness welled up from her heart to her eyes and sent her home weeping quietly behind her veil. But Nano, with her hands clasped tightly over her breast, uttered the true reason of this apparent coldness to her friend. She looked upon herself as a guilty, sin-stained thing, unworthy to breathe the same air with so pure a creature as Olivia Fullerton.

"Never again until I have atoned," she said, staring hard at the pallid woman reflected in the glass—"never, never again to clasp that innocent hand or touch those pure lips with mine ! What a terrible fate I have chosen for myself ! Yet who will know, and when I am dead what will it matter ? For there is but rottenness after death, and saint and sinner are served alike in the grave. If it were true—but no, there is no God, no God, no God!"

The last words were more a question than an assertion. The divine truth was struggling fiercely for a footing in her soul. She wrung her hands and looked at them as Lady Macbeth looked at hers, stained with dream-blood, and with her she almost screamed :

“ All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.”

Then her mood changed. She grew angry at her own weakness, and tried to force upon herself the mask of indifference ; tried to reason her meditated sin into an act of justice and pity ; tried to laugh at the whole affair as a very ordinary proceeding over which she was making herself ridiculous.

“ Poor little hand ! You have sinned no more than to raise yourself against one who in his craziness would rob your mistress ; who gave her life, and riches, and honor, only to sink her into a deeper abyss of death, and poverty, and shame ; who taught her to love with her whole heart this which he would now deprive her of for the sake of a superstition. The world will say you have done well, and there is no other to judge or know. For there is—no—”

Her head fell on her breast, and the tears of vexation fell from her eyes. She did not utter her blasphemy a second time, and she could not ; for on the pages of her heart was written in fadeless characters the truth she would fain have denied.

“ Am I deserting my belief ? ” she muttered. “ Am I yielding to this superstition ? Oh ! this Olivia and her brother are my bad angels. If I did not know them what would I care for this plotting of Killany’s or its result ! I will forget them. They shall not be my Mentors. But oh ! to forget my own heart. To put away all that is good and lovable about me—can

I do that and live?" In her anguish she sat, as she had often done before, for hours in meditation.

The next evening, when she was dressing for the carnival, Killany came in hurriedly and sent up an urgent message. She came down to the hall in her brilliant costume, and electrified him.

"Ah,"—and the tone of his voice was not of the sweetest—"you are going to the carnival? I must put off my business until to-morrow."

"If you would be so kind. I expect my party every moment."

"Mrs. Strachan, I suppose."

"She will be there, of course," was her direct evasion. "The general is, you know, a good skater and a good gossip. She is kind-hearted, too."

"Extremely so. I may say good-evening."

"But you have not noticed my dress."

And she stood away from him, and let him see it in various lights and positions.

"It is very brilliant," he said, pleased at her graceful familiarity. "Not so complete as it might be, perhaps. There is one ornament lacking; a gold-haired Apollo, or, if it suits you, another Orion."

"I shall meet many of them, no doubt. What a pity you are not coming!"

"I regret that business is pressing. Permit me. Good-evening."

He bowed himself out, chagrined at he knew not what, and raging with very well-defined jealousy.

A little later came the maskers of the carnival; Sir Stanley in his Swedish peasant habit, Olivia as she had described herself, and the grave doctor in the charming holiday dress of a twelfth century gallant. They drove off, laughing very heartily at the grotesque combination of costumes, and were soon in the midst of the

weirdest throng that ever the frozen bosom of the bay had borne. It was a clear moonlight night, without wind or heavy frost, and not too cold to permit of a long, quiet talk after the limbs had been loosened and wearied with skating. This was the first note which Sir Stanley took of the scene. A circle of ropes and guards shut off the maskers from the broad expanse of the bay, and over this spot fell the glare of a thousand torchlights and colored lanterns. The assembly was already large—too large for a quiet talk, Sir Stanley observed—and ridiculous as such assemblies usually are. The anachronisms in the costumes and their grotesque contrasts kept the ladies in subdued but continued laughter.

“There is our devil,” said Olivia to her companion, as the character glided by with the proverbial tail over his arm; “what a labor you would have *exorcising* him!”

“If it were to be done according to ritual, yes,” said the baronet boastfully; “but otherwise, why, no. Give me your hand and let us proceed with the *abandon* suited to our character. I am going to startle you when we reach the retired corners.”

“I don’t wish to be startled,” said Olivia decidedly, but with beating heart, “and therefore I shall not go into the retired corners. It doesn’t become even a peasant girl to be wandering in dark places.”

“As you please. I can and will startle you here just as well, only it occurred to me that for your own sake you would prefer to be unobserved.”

Olivia knew not what to do or say in her distress. It was very clear that Sir Stanley was going to propose, and, although a few days earlier she would have hailed the event with simple and single-hearted joy, it was now become a most painful proceeding. Diana

and her cavalier flew past in as high spirits as two eminently grave persons could be, and she made a vain effort to draw them to her side. The devil, with horns and tail prominent in the moonlight, was slipping over the ice ahead, and it rashly occurred to her to engage him in conversation. But as there might spring up an occasion of exorcising for Sir Stanley, she wisely restrained herself and submitted to fate.

“Would you not please wait,” she said humbly, “until later in the evening? I did not expect very much pleasure from the carnival, but you will destroy it all if you speak as you intend.”

“Your words are anything but encouraging,” said he, starting; “and since you seem to understand so well what I am going to say in the dark corners, come, sister, and hear it at once.”

There was nothing but to obey, for Sir Stanley’s voice was rather imperative in sound. They left the charmed circle of the maskers and glided away into the blue, silvered twilight beyond. The moonlight fell in a shower on the ice. In the distance twinkled the lights of the island, behind them gleamed the city’s fiery eyes, and from an illuminated spot came the sounds of music and happy voices, and the flash and glitter of gaily-attired forms, misty and pleasant as a dream. Around them was a desert scattered with parties of two as far as possible from one another, and moving with spirit-like gracefulness.

“Olivia, began the baronet, when they had gone a convenient distance, “I believe you have understood, at least within the last few weeks, the attentions I have been paying you. You no doubt have heard the opinions of other people on the matter, and, as you did not discourage me, I have hoped that my suit was not disagreeable. I ask you now to be my wife.”

"I do not know what to answer," said she, with a sudden burst of weeping. "I cannot tell, Sir Stanley, whether I shall or not."

This answer was a poser for the baronet, although he had an idea that it was not precisely unfavorable. He was silent for some time, not a little disturbed in his efforts to think the matter into shape with the lady sobbing at his side.

"Yes or no," he argued, "is the usual answer. This must be a mean of some kind. Perhaps it signifies 'I want to, but I cannot; circumstances will not permit.' And what could be the matter with the pretty thing? Egad! I am off my balance mentally as well as sentimentally, and if I am not set right again I should like to select a convenient air-hole and end the programme with an unsuccessful suicide."

"Your answer, Olivia," said he aloud, "is rather queer. I love you, dear, and I thought you might have loved me a little."

"So I do—very much," murmured she, with a blush that would have entranced him had it been daylight. The baronet was intoxicated at this confession, and very naturally trembled.

"You frighten me, Olivia. If you love me—and I thank you a thousand times for that sweet saying—why can you not tell if you will marry me? It is mysterious and dreadful."

"I know it, Sir Stanley. But I must ask you to wait for just the shortest time, and be patient until I can discover something I wish to know."

"Something you wish to know?" repeated the astonished gentleman.

"Is that so very wonderful?" she replied, with a touch of the old sauciness.

‘ Oh ! no, Olivia, not at all. But I trust it is nothing—of course it isn’t.’

“Concerning you, Sir Stanley? I never doubted your goodness, and kindness, and honesty. It is about myself, and you will have to wait so short a time until I am able to say yes or no.”

She choked again at the thought of uttering the sad negative, which circumstances might make a necessity. The baronet, quite overcome, wished to appeal to the stars or to do some other foolish thing in testimony of his inability to survive an adverse answer. However, a sensible silence intervened. They skated slowly round in a limited circle, until Olivia expressed her wish to return.

“At least I shall always know that you loved me,” he said, as they glided away; for he had been thinking of the mournful possibility of a parting, simply to enjoy in fancy the luxury which he imagined would never be afforded him. Very hopefully they returned to the revellers. They passed an absent-minded pair taking the direction of the open bay.

“By the gleam of gold and the rustling of silk,” said Sir Stanley, “I would take the gentleman for Harry.”

“And I know,” said Olivia, with scarcely a joyous tone in her words, “that the lady is Nano. Do you not see her quiver and bow?”

“What a learned conversation they must be having! She will quote Voltaire and Taine. He will bury her under St. Augustine and Brownson. We can even hear what they are saying.”

They stopped to listen. The doctor’s deep and penetrating tones were easily heard at a long distance, and Nano’s sweet treble floated to their ears as gently as the flight of a bird, but the words were not dis-

tinguishable. They went on out of sight, and the peasants joined the revellers once more. The number had increased, and the new figures were rather startling. A thin, frisky figure in a bird-suit hopped and chirped comically throughout the circle, and annoyed Olivia extremely by his attentions, until the baronet, observing, threatened to pitch him into his proper sphere. A tall form with flowing white hair and beard, clothed in furs and glittering with icicles of glass and steel, seemed also inclined to pester her with attentions, but took warning by the threat against the man-bird, and, after gazing about earnestly for some moments, went off lakewards.

Nano and the doctor were conversing, with dangerous seriousness and much sentiment, on various subjects when the fur clad representative of the frozen north flew by on wind-wings and glanced at them sharply as he passed. Presently the man-bird came skating in the same direction, and, being less careful than the other, approached near enough to have the doctor's fingers suddenly and firmly pressed about his throat.

"You are too bold, Quip," he said mildly, and Quip's eyes were starting from his head. "Go back."

Without a word, and with his feathers considerably rumpled, the fowl stole away, followed shortly by the Frozen North, who, as he flew by again, laughed to himself quietly and favored them with another stare.

"An underbred fellow," said the doctor.

"I shivered when he passed," said Nano. "Let us go back, Dr. Fullerton, for we shall not find our friends here."

"I fear that we have not made much of an effort to find them," he laughed. "They are probably re-

turned by this, and we may expect some raillery from them on our moonlight search."

They met with Sir Stanley and Olivia standing on the outside circle and quietly watching the scene before them. There was so little animation in their manner and countenances that the doctor and his partner felt uneasy. They had suspected the baronet's intention of tempting his fate to-night, and if he had done so it was clear that he met only with disaster.

"Well, Diana," cried Olivia, with forced gayety, "your hunt was a long one. What game did you succeed in bringing down?"

"Only a heart," answered the doctor in her stead, "and without using an arrow. The moonlight, the silence, and some other circumstances made it an easy victim."

"You act up to your costume, Harry," returned the baronet.

"Which is more, I'll engage," returned the doctor, "than you can say for yourself"

"True," said Sir Stanley, with a vexed look; "no peasant could be as solemn as I at this moment."

"And none," repeated Nano, "could be more solemn than our Olivia here."

Olivia had suddenly withdrawn her attention from their raillery. The tone of a voice on the ice without the circle had reached her ears, and she was listening, as she listened on the night of the reception, to the bitter words the voice framed and uttered.

"Here? Of course. No society is safe from them. If their antecedents were as correct and stainless as the queen's own they could not have greater assurance. You did not hear of it? I am surprised. I thought it was known everywhere. The bar sinister

is on their escutcheon. I cut them long ago, so far as professional etiquette would permit, and I wonder how they have stood so long."

"That is plain," another answered. "When a woman of fashion and a man of title combine to favor a thing it is sure of success. They are out of my books, however, though they were smiled on by her majesty herself."

"The woman of fashion and the man of title will leave quickly enough when it reaches their ears. It take the power of a king to make such rubbish popular."

The voice stopped there, and she heard no more. The others were too busily engaged with themselves to pay attention to the loud speaker, but Nano caught his last words.

"Killany here!" he exclaimed. "I am sure I heard his voice near."

"Hardly possible," said the doctor. "He assured me he was not going."

"Why are you so silent, Olivia?" said the baronet.

"I am cold"—she was actually shivering with anguish and terror—"and do you not think we had better return? We have been here a good two hours, and the crowd is getting thinner now."

"Two hours?" said Nano. "That is not probable."

"But it is a fact," Olivia replied, showing her watch. "And your indifference to time shows how thoroughly you enjoyed it."

They left the ice immediately, and in ascending to the wharf were passed by an acquaintance, who saluted.

"Good evening, Miss McDonell. Good evening, Sir Stanley."

"Good evening, Mr. Hughes," said the doctor, as the gentleman did not seem to recognize him or Olivia. "Are you forgetting your friends?"

"Ah! to be sure—yes—good evening," said Hughes rather confusedly, and not waiting to make apologies or explanations. Harry could not understand why a warm spot glowed on his cheek at this strange manner of address, but Olivia could very easily account for the deadly chill which set her shivering again and made her clasp the baronet's arm fiercely.

"You are slipping," said he.

"A little," she answered faintly, and was silent.

"Rather a cool way of taking the blunder," the doctor remarked to Nano. "At least he might have explained."

She said nothing in reply, but wondered, and Sir Stanley was too busy with his partner to pay much attention to these trifles. They reached the carriage and were driven home in apparently good spirits. But Olivia was reserved and sad.

"I wonder what Hughes meant by it?" were the last words of the doctor to his sister that night.

"He is very well bred," she answered carelessly, "but he is often enough in his cups. He did not seem to be displeased or angry, only confused."

The answer did not satisfy the doctor, and he bade her good night with a clouded face.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

A close watch had been set upon McDonell from the evening on which he had declared his intention of sending for Bishop Leonard and making over a certain amount of property to him for the benefit of the orphans he had wronged, or, in consequence of

their non appearance, for the benefit of the poor. He had given to his valet the next morning a note for his lordship, which, being safely placed in Nano's hands, found its way speedily into the fire. He had been advised by Killany to remain within doors for a few days. The excitement of his last interview with Nano had injured him. Continual brooding since was wasting him slowly. He felt the necessity of quiet for a time, and obeyed the physician's instructions so honestly that he did not discover at once the position in which his daughter had placed him. He spent the hours in self-reproach, or in prayer, or in wandering aimlessly through the rooms of his own suite ; sometimes vowing vengeance against any who would dare to oppose him, and again crying weakly for humility and patience in his sufferings. The world without was so beautiful, the sky so clear, the sun so bright, everything that breathed or grew so full of life's cheery activity and fascinating movement, that, pressing his face against the window—his old, withered, pallid face against the cold pane, he laughed from the bitterness of his heart. It was horrible that the contrast between his loved world and himself should be so much in his disfavor; that in his heart and home misery, sin, and disease should reign so triumphantly, while the inanimate world and the vulgar rabble rejoiced.

Late on that evening which had taken Nano to the carnival he gave to his valet a note for the priest. He followed the man with noiseless steps to the hall, and had the mournful satisfaction of seeing him read it and then fling it contemptuously into the stove with a laugh and a joke for one lean little figure which sat comfortably near to the fire.

“ Old man still hangs to the one idea,” said Mr.

Quip, who had been placed in his present position as Dr. Killany's representative.

"Yes ; he is bound to see the bishop, and waits with fine patience his return home. Wouldn't have done it, though, but for Killany, who told him that it would be dangerous to stir abroad in his present state of health and irritation. The old man is that careful of himself, you know, that he'll do any foolish thing to keep from getting ill again. Thank Heaven if they can but get him into the asylum!"

"That's a spot where dull care will never visit him," said Quip meditatively. "Between the choruses of his neighbors and the strait waistcoats and shower-baths of the institution he will not have much leisure for thought. He will be violent, and will get his share of all these punishments. He is nervous, and they will affect him more than others. I would not be afraid to bet that he is dead within six months. The grave is a smoother and softer bed. It is circumscribed, but you have the satisfaction of knowing that by your own desire you were put there, and, being dead, that it was the very best place for you."

And both laughed at this sally.

McDonell's desire to rush out upon them and strangle them in their scornful mood was so strong that he shrank away in terror from himself. Was he really mad or going mad, as these men said and people imagined?

"It would not be hard to make me so," he thought, with a shiver of uncontrollable fear ; "and that, perhaps, is the game. If they knew how little it would avail they would not be so cruel. But there are other means to bend the stubborn, and they who do not stop at this will stop at nothing. O God ! this is now thy time of vengeance."

He stole away to think over this new evidence of his danger and his daughter's perfidy, and stole back again, overpowered with peevish rage, when the door-bell rang. He was not himself, and it would have been better to have remained secluded for a time instead of irritating his mind still more by every fresh proof of his sad misfortunes. He could not, however, control himself. From his position he saw that a gentleman, a friend, had entered and presented his card to the servant with the request that he might see Mr. McDonell immediately. The servant sighed and shook his head mournfully.

"Very sorry, sir, but he be that bad as how the doctors say no one can go near him."

"Ah! is it true what I have heard, that he is becoming more confirmed in his weakness of mind?"

"I fear me, sir, too true. It is not known as yet, not even to Miss McDonell, how very bad he is."

"Liar! villain!" cried the unwise and enraged McDonell, rushing upon the man from his place of concealment with flaming eyes and a face distorted with the passion he could not control. "You dare to repeat to my friends those calumnies! I will choke you till the eyes start from your lying head. Run, you villain, run!"

Ard the servant did run, with howls of terror so genuine that the whole kitchen, headed by the valet and Quip, came tumbling into the hall. The visitor, with a very pale, embarrassed countenance, was backing dignifiedly to the door. This movement brought the madman to his senses partially.

"Sir," he said, controlling his voice with a great and visible effort, "pardon me for this unseemly behavior; but these villains, as you see, would make me

mad in spite of myself. There is no need, I hope, to tell you it is a calumny."

"Not at all," said the gentleman soothingly. "I regret having disturbed you exceedingly, and I—"

"Ah! you believe as the rest," cried the merchant, half in scorn and half in agony. "Then do not go until you have convinced yourself of my sanity. I am not mad."

"We all know that, sir," said the valet behind him. "Not mad, sir, but only irritated, sir, and forgetting that the doctor wished you to keep your room and not excite yourself, sir."

"Away, wretch!" roared McDonell, bursting again into a white rage at sight of his jailer. "Though you are the tool of greater villains, you have betrayed me."

The man retired precipitately before the anger of his master, and was received into the bosom of the crowd with a chorus of screams and expressions of sympathy. The merchant was about to make a second appeal to his visitor, who was now at the door, when Quip touched his arm.

"You would make these men believe you sane," he said, fixing his beady eyes on the restless ones of the invalid, and holding them to his own, "and yet you are taking the surest means to convince them of your insanity. This is not the time nor the place to proclaim it. You look like a madman now. Retire to your room, sir, and be careful to act, not as an ordinary man would act under the circumstances, but with the devil's own cunning. You will need it to get people out of the notions they have concerning you."

"Who you are I know not," said McDonell, impressed by Quip's words, "but you speak wisely. I shall follow your advice. And my visitor is gone;

that shows me how I have blundered, for he will surely think I am mad."

The servants stood at a distance, whispering and wondering, their fears quite overcome by their curiosity. Mr. Quip winked at them and smiled, and they answered with a nodding of heads and a noiseless clapping of hands to indicate their approbation of his coolness and dexterity.

"Go to your places," said the merchant, waving his hand towards them; and he would have said more, but that they vanished pell-mell into the kitchen regions, and made that part of the house echo for some moments afterwards with the screaming of the more sensitive females and the rattling of tins and dishes. Fearful that he would assail them there and then, the more cool-headed ones barricaded the door. In the hall were left only the valet and Mr. Quip, to the former of whom the master gave his particular attention.

"You may consider yourself discharged," he said, "and without a character. You are my servant no longer. Having betrayed me, it is not safe to give you the opportunity of betraying other unfortunates."

He was going to his room when Nano entered from the carnival in her dress of the celestial huntress, gay with the glitter of silk and gold, and even light-hearted. The shrinking attitude of the valet, the important airs of Mr. Quip, and the wild glances and appearance and manner of her father gave her immediate insight into the scenes which lately had taken place. The kitchen echoes had not yet subsided. She paled slightly, and was going on to her own apartments when her father stopped her.

"Come with me," he said imperiously. She followed him into the library with a sinking heart, but

with resolute and unmoved exterior, and for a few moments they stood quietly facing each other, his hands nervously twitching together, his eyes reading her face as if to find there some hope of which he had not yet dreamed.

“Are you my daughter?” he asked sneeringly when his scrutiny was finished.

“You have better grounds to call me that, sir, than I to call you father. Why do you ask?”

“Father, father!” he repeated, with a broader sneer. “That comes trippingly from your tongue, does it not? And yet you have lost all right to that honored title. You have made me a madman—me, your father, who schemed and sinned to make you what you are, who in his misery and repentance made you his first thought, who shaped every action in your regard, preferring to desert his God and his salvation, almost, for your sake. You have repaid me for my old indifference. You have made me a madman. I am, if you can make good this vile calumny, as good as dead and buried. And yet, before God, my sin is not so great as yours. I gave you part of a father’s love and care, and you have never looked with love on me. You now add crime to indifference. Tell me, is it your intention to put me in an asylum?”

She did not answer, for she could not.

“Tell me, tell me,” he repeated fiercely, bringing his wild eyes close to her face and seizing her violently by the arms, “do you meditate that sin?”

“Am I safe,” she answered boldly, “with one who, sane or not, chooses to act the madman? Am I to be blamed for confining one who treats his own not even as the dogs of the street would treat them?”

“I am always forgetting,” he said mournfully, re-

leasing his hold ; "and there is the apology of my enemies."

He stood for a moment with his hands clasped to his forehead, the picture of woe and helplessness; then he went over to the mantel and took down a crucifix that hung there veiled. Pressing it to his bosom, he said : "I submit, and acknowledge the justice of my punishment. I submit, I submit. Only remember, my God, that I am deserted by the one whom I most loved. You had mother and friend in your affliction. I have no one. Be my support, and be merciful to my pitiless persecutors.

"You, unfortunate woman, since you are determined to go on in your sinful path, bear in mind one thing: your sin will recoil on you, as mine has recoiled on me. Perhaps you are already judged and condemned. See what my punishment is. You have added to my pride and my injustice the ingratitude of hell, and your punishment will be in proportion. Go now and think upon my words." He turned from her and continued to walk the length of the room with the crucifix in his hands, entirely oblivious of her presence. She bore herself with wonderful self-command. During his denunciation she stood calm as a marble statue, with her eyes fixed on him, and seemed to derive comfort and strength from the looking. She was moved and frightened by his appeal. She thought he was becoming what she had desired him to be—a madman. His whole appearance, lean, shrivelled, pallid, his hair dishevelled and his eyes burning, was that of one insane; and insane he was, poor old man! with grief and disappointment.

She left him presently and sent for Quip.

"Go to the office in the morning, and inform Dr.

Killany of what you have seen and heard to-night. He will know what to do afterwards."

"Your servant, ma'am," replied the gentleman, and, agreeably to instructions received from Killany, went immediately upon his errand.

Dr. Fullerton found him in quiet raptures the next morning in the outer office. He was perched, as usual, on the arm of his chair, deeply engaged in reading up a most profound work on insanity. With every new discovery he slapped his leg, or, closing the book, cried of the author :

"What a genius! One would think he had this particular case in his eye when he wrote this work."

"You seem interested, Quip," said the doctor. "What's the object?"

"Lunacy," answered Mr. Quip, with a knowing wink. "It was delirium tremens before, spontaneous combustion next, and now it is lunacy, which throws every other in the shade. I never paid much attention to it up to this, but our respected superior has a case on hand which has given me a grand insight into the business. Some rich old nabob on Wilton Avenue, with an only daughter, has sent his brains to parts unknown. What's left of him is not even animal."

"I was not aware of that. Who is the gentleman?"

"He whom they call McDonell. He had paralysis some time ago, and it touched his brain."

The doctor rose in astonishment, and the whispered words of Killany on that day when he had ridden with him from McDonell's to the office came back to his memory. He had heard rumors, but nothing so decided as Quip's information.

"Are you sure of the man, Quip—quite sure?"

"Morally certain, sir. Wasn't I there last night at the prettiest row that ever took place outside of an asylum? They have had the old gentleman under guard for some days. Only yesterday he began to suspect that all wasn't well with him in the upper regions, and he gets suspicious of every one in an instant. The doctors had forbidden visitors. One came just after I got back from the carnival, and was inquiring of the servant all about it, when out bounded the old chap like a fury, choked the servant, kicked the visitor because he was slow in admitting his sanity, and was rushing at his valet when I tapped his arm, caught him as he turned, and laid him on his back. Then I sat on him.

"'You're not mad,' says I.

"'I know it, villain!' says he.

"'But you're acting mad,' says I again, 'and that is just as foolish. Now, if you will go to your room sensible, and even gay, I will let you up.'

"'You're right,' says he. 'I'll do it.'

"And so he did quite reasonably. It was a sight to see the servants, who had been looking on, scurry through the door when he shook his finger at them, and the valet's knees trembled when he looked at him. His daughter came in then, and he called her into the library. She was rigged out—oh! but I remember you were her escort and don't stand in need of a description. At any rate she didn't look so sweet coming out as when she went in, and the upshot of it is that there is to be an examination to day by the doctors, and you are one of the gang. Then, I suppose, comes a writ *de lunatico*, and our old gentleman is whipped off to the asylum. Fine thing, this insanity."

Mr. Quip returned to his book and the doctor with-

drew to the inner office, unaccountably troubled and disturbed. He had no idea of the extremity to which Nano's father had been reduced, and it smote on him awkwardly that she should have accompanied them to the carnival while he was in such a sad condition at home. A note came from Killany after office-hours, requesting him to come to McDonell House without delay. It was noon, and he hastened away directly. He knew that the examination was to take place, and he felt some anxiety and considerable curiosity as to the result. In the drawing room of McDonell House he met two medical gentlemen, experts in detecting the presence of insanity, and of some fame in their own districts. Killany was in the upper rooms with Nano, and Olivia too, for he heard her voice on the stairs. Presently Killany entered, bland, smooth, and dignified as usual.

"A rather sad case, gentlemen," he said in tones of studied professional grief; "violent at times even to his daughter, but for the most part melancholy."

The experts looked at each other significantly.

"We have thought it best," continued Killany, as if in explanation to Fullerton, "that but one of us should visit him at a time. We can compare notes afterwards. Will you be so kind, Doctor B., as to take precedence?"

"If you wish it," replied the doctor, and under the guidance of a servant he proceeded to the library.

McDonell showed no surprise, or interest, or alarm at the appearance of the visitor. The appearance of the invalid, worn and exhausted as he had been by disease, was not favorable. His thin, pallid face and trembling, unsettled manner, his frequent sighs and moody expression, his inattention and discourtesy, his rapid, sidelong glances, his neg'ected, shifting

toilet, were circumstances not calculated to remove preconceived notions of insanity. The sorrows and dangers pressing around him, surging at his feet like the waves or an angry ocean, had driven him into a state of mind for the time akin to madness. He was cunning enough to have defeated the malice of his enemies in this examination, had he suspected its ultimate object. He paid no attention to his visitor, and to his cautious questions gave gruff, incoherent, and inapposite answers, staring at him sometimes insolently, burying himself in the papers for a moment, wringing his hands convulsively as if in strong mental agony, and altogether behaving as much like a madman as a sane man could. Doctor B. left him with a decided conviction of his insanity, but he classed it as a mild though obstinate species. The second expert returned with a similar opinion, as he met with a similar reception.

Since Dr. Fullerton's opinion went for little or nothing against the testimony already given by the experts, Killany cared not what he thought or said; but for the sake of appearances he followed the example of the others and proceeded to interview the patient. McDonell paid no attention to him until it occurred to his sensitive but dazed mind that the number of his medical visitors were strangely increasing, when he said, without looking up:

“Are there any more of you?”

“I am the last,” answered the doctor in tones of the gravest, most respectful pity. “I hope you do not consider my presence an intrusion.”

The merchant did not at once reply. A spasm of pain for an instant contracted his face and a shiver crept through his half dead limbs. He turned his head towards the doctor with horror in his eyes. A

glance at his examiner did not seem to reassure him. He put out his hands feebly, as if to wave him from his sight.

"Away, away!" he said hoarsely. "It is enough to disturb my sleeping hours with your dread presence; do not make the day hideous. I will do justice to your children, if they live. Have I not been trying hard—hard—hard? But the devil, who sends you to torment me is plotting against me. Why do you come too? There are many who will make me mad without your assistance. Away, away!"

And he groaned and pushed his hands against the empty air, as if thrusting from him a heavy body.

"You mistake," said the doctor gently, "if you think there is here another beside myself."

"Do I not know your voice? How often have you stood beside my bed when I was weak and helpless, and mocked me! Go! in Heaven's name, go! Do I not suffer enough with my daughter and the devil leagued against me? Away!"

He had worked himself into a frightful state of feeling. His eyes were starting, his face was flushed and swollen. The doctor rose hastily and left the room.

"Well?" said Killany, when he entered the parlor.

"Mad," said Fullerton briefly—"violently mad."

"Ah!" And Killany smiled in an ambiguous manner, and turned to the other physicians: "Let us compare notes, gentlemen, and then settle on our report."

It was very neatly and even facetiously done over a decanter of Burgundy. The four medical gentlemen gave it as their opinion that McDonell was hopelessly insane, and recommended immediate consignment to an asylum.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST INTERVIEW.

Killany came up stairs, after the consultation was over, to announce the result to Nano. As she was quite prepared for it, there was no display of emotion.

"In a few days," Killany said, "the legal formalities will be ended."

"It is all in your hands," she replied shortly, and with so evident a desire to be rid of him that he took his leave forthwith.

"I cannot resist," she said afterwards to Olivia, "the temptation to show likes and dislikes after your blunt fashion. I am utterly unstrung, and have not the patience to do these things with tact and discretion. Perhaps I am more sincere."

"I am afraid not," said Olivia. "It is so much to your taste and so much a part of your nature to do things after a society model that any new departure savors of hypocrisy. I give you credit for sincerity in this case. But, O Nano! is not this a terrible misfortune which has befallen you?"

"Terrible is not the word," answered the lady, clasping her hands. "It is crushing. I doubt if I will ever recover from it."

They were speaking, and Nano alone knew it, of very different things. Olivia alluded to McDonell's insanity, the lady to her own crime.

"There is nothing in it so bitter," Olivia hastily replied, struck by the expression of her friend's coun-

tenance, "that you need mourn for ever. It is very painful, and you don't know how sorry I am for your trouble."

"I have no tears," said Nano. "I cannot weep, unless it be for myself. Often the bars of an asylum hold more satisfaction, and peace, and goodness than the plate-glass of a mansion like this. I wonder would my father change places with me?"

"With you, Nano!" cried her friend, quite shocked.

"Ah! I was rambling, was I not? Yet, crazy and all as he is—"

"No, not crazy," said a cold, quiet, hard voice from the door, "but wronged, cruelly, deeply wronged, and by his own child."

McDonell was standing there with his fiery eyes glaring upon them, but his face was calm in expression, his manner was no longer nervous and hurried, and altogether he looked more like the cool headed business man of old than he had done since his illness. Nano's presence of mind did not forsake her at this untoward incident. She retained her seat, determined to face the present danger with all her nerve and impudence. But Olivia, startled beyond measure by his appearance and his words, grew pale and flushed by turns, and stood looking helplessly from one to the other.

"If you wish to speak to me, father," said Nano gently, "pray return to your own room, and I will follow at once. For the present respect our guest, Miss Fullerton, so much as to leave instantly."

"I do respect her so much," he answered calmly, "that I shall not go till I have made known to her what a wretched thing it is she loves and regards in you. I beg of you to be calm, Miss Fullerton, and to fear nothing from me. A commission of some kind

is about to make me out crazy, I believe, and in a few days I shall be consigned to an asylum, there to end a very miserable life. It is her doing," and he pointed his outstretched arm at the defiant and indifferent woman. "She, my child, my daughter, to retain this ill-gotten wealth of mine, has put me in such a position that no word or writing of mine can have the least value before the law. Oh ! beware of her, young lady. Never did serpent wear a smoother guise than this. Never did a sepulchre look more beautiful. Beware of her!"

" You are not yourself, father," said the lady, still calm and unmoved. " You have told my friends this same story many times in a few days, and it has but injured yourself. You wish to appear reasonable, and your mad words carry only a surer conviction of your insanity to those who know you. Pray retire to your room."

He would have spoken had not his attendants suddenly entered and forced him out of his daughter's presence. True to a certain line of conduct which he seemed to have adopted, the old gentleman did not attempt to resist this violence, but went away with the attendants quietly, leaving two frightened women behind him.

" You see, Olivia," said Nano, with a dejected air, " what I am called on to endure daily. Regularly I have had those reproaches flung at me. He has gone over the same catalogue of my offences—it is very long when given in full—sometimes in his own room or mine, and often before witnesses. I have concealed it as much as possible from the outside world. I did wish very much to conceal it from you."

" I will forget," said Olivia quickly. " But that he should turn on you of all others ! "

"It is the worst feature of his madness, and through all his sickness I was his most devoted and tireless attendant. He would have none other. But let us dismiss so sad a subject."

"And myself at the same time," said Olivia, rising to go. "Good by, dear, and God give you strength to bear this suffering! Ah! Nano, if you knew Him as you should, this hour would not seem so dark. The sympathy which men cannot give, which would reach into the depths of your soul as rain into the earth, would be yours. You seem to go further from him every day. Good-by."

As before, Nano managed to avoid kiss and hand-clasp from her friend. Smiling, she said:

"If it would please you I could almost believe in your beautiful superstitions. But I know that you want conviction of their truth as well as of their beauty, which in all honesty I cannot give."

Olivia went away sadly troubled about many ill-defined things. The scene with McDonell left a dark impression on her mind and gave rise to an unconscious suspicion against her friend.

"His own daughter!" she thought. "Oh! if my father were alive"—and a sudden pang shot through her heart at the recollection of Killany's slanders—"and he should fall into the same state, I think that, no matter how fierce he might be towards others, with me he would be always gentle. And yet I have heard that the insane do the most shocking things even to those whom they have best loved."

Three days later the arrangements, legal and otherwise, for McDonell's removal to the asylum were completed, and Nano and Killany were appointed administrators and guardians of the estate. Killany himself, in his graceful and delicate fashion, had in-

formed McDonell of the decision of the law and of the hour of his departure, and the unfortunate man had asked mildly to see his daughter once again before he set out for his new home. He made no outcry, uttered no reproaches. His resignation was complete.

Nano came to the library a few moments before his departure. Her great self-command was never more severely tried than on this day. Her face still wore its old pallor, but her eyes and features were expressive of no emotion, and she took a seat before him as if the circumstances were the most ordinary of her life. This would have angered him had he been open to passion. Since passion was forcibly dead in him, he passed it over in silence.

"I know scarcely why I have called you," he said, with an ease of manner and expression that staggered her, "and hardly know what I am to say to you except it be to say farewell. I can imagine that you have thought long and carefully on the deed which is to be consummated to day. One does not deliberately settle down to the commission of a desperate act without long consideration of the difficulties which may surround it. I did not when I stole from two little orphans the thousands which you steal again at this later date. Among my many apprehensions was not that of imprisonment in a lunatic asylum. You have done well. You are as successful as I was, and you may be as unsuccessful as I am. In me see the end of all iniquity. You triumph for to-day, and to-morrow your hour will come. But you have thought of these things, no doubt, and I but waste breath in pointing out to you the future consequences of your crime. I wish to tell you from my very heart I forgive you for all you have done. I was

wicked, and God has chosen to punish me in a most terribly just way through you. I submit to His will. The grave is my next resting-place. I wish to assure you of one thing, and to warn you against another. I shall never raise my hand against you nor speak one word that could result in harm to you. The secret of our sins and misfortunes shall never have mouth with me, except in so far as it is necessary to right the wronged. Beware of Killany. He has lured you into a great snare, and, although I have confidence in your ability to match him, I tremble knowing to what lengths he can dare to go. Guard your good name and your fortune securely from him. Prepare yourself also for suffering. You have only staved off, after my foolish manner, the evil day. May you never know a jot of the suffering I have known!"

He did not say farewell, nor look at her, nor motion her to go. It required a strong effort to keep his emotions in check, and he did not dare to note the effect of his words. She was amazed at his language, and a very tempest of feeling seemed threatening to overpower her resolution.

"You need not go," said she in a low voice. "It is in your power to remain. Say that this idea of restitution was only a fancy, consent to such conditions as I may impose, and you have freedom, and home, and daughter left to you still."

"That cannot be," he answered grimly. "I go to the asylum."

"It is a terrible place," she continued, hopefully attempting to work on his fears—"a place of hideous sights and sounds, where the old and enfeebled, and often the strong, though never so sane, are sure to lose their wits in time. Its mournful silences, broken only by yells, and howls, and wailings, its hopeless-

ness—for he who enters there leaves hope behind—are appalling. Can you think of enduring all this when one word might save you?"

"You make a good tempter," he said, with a smiling, sidelong, cynical glance at her. "Respect yourself and your pride, which I once thought strong enough to support the devil. In the silence of that place I shall have sweeter peace than you in the midst of a ball-room rout. I shall take hope with me, for it never deserts the Christian. And I can think of enduring it all even with knowledge of what would save me. It is you who condemn me to all this misery."

"Rather it is yourself. The law has been my champion against your madness."

"Do you think that will save you from remorse? Not if every judge and physician in the land ratified your conduct."

"You do not wish then to save yourself?"

"Not wish! If it must be at the cost of a soul, no. It is horrible to think of the life I shall lead there—I, a poor old man, weighed down with age and disease—but it is not the greatest of misfortunes. I had no pity on others, nor did I spare them. Why, then, should I be pitied or spared?"

"There is pity for you, father," she said in tones so sweet, and tremulous, and loving that he turned towards her quickly. "You are pitiless with yourself."

She seemed stirred, and there was a nameless something in her glance that inspired him with a mad hope.

"I can never say what you want said," he half whispered. "You know my beliefs. But, O Nano! do not be so cruel; you—"

The encouraging light fled from her eyes, and she walked to the door. A fearful struggle was going on

in his breast. His last sole hope was leaving him. His pallor grew deeper and his breath came in gasps. At that moment the jingle of sleigh-bells was heard on the avenue. The carriage was driving up to the door, the carriage in which he was to be taken to prison, and with that fatal sound all his resolutions fled. Down on his knees he fell, the father before his child, his face streaming with tears, his hands clasped towards her, his old face agonized beyond the power of words to tell.

“Nano, my child, I cannot say that word, but oh! have mercy on your father.”

The words went out to the walls. She had rushed from his presence like one demented, passing blindly the doctors and asylum officers in the hall, flinging aside the outstretched arms of Olivia waiting with pitiful face and eager heart to address and comfort her, and burying herself in the refuge of her own room. She took her station at the window, and watched with wild eyes the emaciated man who stood for a moment on the step awaiting with calm dignity the disposition of the officers who had him in charge. Curious eyes were upon him, and he was not disturbed. There was no trace of the late trying emotion in his countenance. He stepped into the carriage with scarcely a glance around him, and so was led away to his dreadful prison, while she, with mad tossings and ravings, flung herself on the floor, crying,

“What have I done? what have I done?”

She lay there moaning as strong natures moan when once they have hopelessly burst their bounds, leaving a grief-stricken girl to stand amazed at the open door, then to close it with a pale countenance, and to go away abhorring that house on which seemed to have fallen the curse of God.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LULL AFTER THE STORM.

It was near the end of the month of February, and the winter began to show signs of breaking up its encampment in Canada. The Canadian world bore the event with composure. They were skilled in the peculiarities of their blustering friend, and knew that he would not, like the Arabs, fold his tents in the night and silently steal away. He gave long, comfortable warnings. If a sleighing-party was projected in early March it might be proceed with as leisurely as in the depths of the season. There was no need of making all arrangements and completing them within two days. If the snow was scarce in the city the country could still afford enough for a cutter, and not infrequently, after a seemingly pronounced departure, the frosty old joker returned suddenly for a positively last appearance, and played the mischief with Canadian tempers and Canadian spring costumes. The whirl and rush of pleasure still went on. The snow lay thick and the days were clear and sunshiny; parties and balls were as numerous as in the early season, and were quite as vigorously attended; the theatres were in full blast; the Saturday promenades distinguished by the usual number of well dressed people, male and female simpletons being plentifully sprinkled about; and altogether the sea of fashionable society was tossing with old-time audacity, bearing on its bosom the gayest of travellers, whose voices could be heard from ten o'clock of this morning until three

o'clock of the next, and sometimes longer, if the champagne chanced to be plentiful.

The noise only of the tumult, the last ridge of the breakers reached the highland of desolation and portentous quiet where the houses of the Fullertons and the McDonells stood. Sorrow and crime had drawn a cordon around those fated dwellings, beyond which the votaries of pleasure were not to go. Deeply they regretted it, so far as McDonell House was concerned; but the little dwelling which had been Olivia's pride was passed by with a supercilious stare or never approached at all. Nano was not at home for days after her father's departure for the asylum. How she spent the hours in the loneliness of the great house, unvisited even by Killany, God only knows. What sorrowful images must have surrounded her bedside in the darkness of night! What gloomy spectres and harsh meditations must have thrust themselves upon her by day! What bitter, hopeless regret for the past must have been hers; what hopelessness for the future, with the recollection of what she was, with the memory of what she had done, weighing upon her! The disgust which the sensitive soul suffers after a humiliating fall her soul enjoyed to its full measure, and the mournful consciousness that her crime could never be undone was the spectre which pointed and sneered at her from every side. Like Lady Macbeth, she washed her hands with dreadful persistency, rubbing, and moaning as she rubbed, dreading and knowing that they never would be clean.

The last picture of an old man kneeling with streaming eyes, agonized face, outstretched hands, and pleading voice would never be effaced from her brain. She saw it everywhere. In her sleep the sad cry, "Have mercy, my child, have mercy!" rang in

her ears, and woke her to shiver and tremble and cower for the rest of the night. So the days passed by, full of untold misery and self-abasement.

When nature was exhausted with its own battlings she got relief. A dull indifference or stupor wrapt up thought and sensibility. Her frightful dreams departed; she began her old trick of sleeping like a child through the whole night; her appetite improved, and as a consequence her color came back and the old sweet gravity of her manner, which had been driven off for a time by the feverish gayety of despair. She put away her skeleton. It was obtrusive yet, but was growing stale from custom. A crime cannot haunt the criminal always. Physical weakness or repetition may bring it to the doors again; but bury the chances of ill-health and relapse into sin, and the blunted nature, like any deformed thing, will soon find relief. Perpetual dread, or fear, or sorrow is as impossible to man's animal nature as continual joy. Nano had found the relief of pure exhaustion, which would in time become perhaps more natural, and, mistaking it for the real article, congratulated herself on thus suddenly overcoming conscience, and began her preparations for enjoying to the utmost that wealth which she had so deeply sinned to save to herself. Her thoughts naturally turned to Olivia at the outset—her ideal of the beautiful and true in woman, and now become almost divine to her humiliated mind. Her friend had not called since—well, she could not remember the exact date, but it did not matter. Not matter? Stop! Was not Olivia in the hall that day when she came rushing like a madwoman from her father's presence? And Olivia, she recollects, had held out her arms, her pretty face all cast down with a friend's sorrow, and she had paid no attention to the offered sym-

pathy. Was there any connection between that scene and Olivia's prolonged absence? Could she have any suspicion as to the true state of affairs with regard to McDonell? Her heart stood still. The only creature in the world that loved her to know of her guiltiness! Oh! it could not be; and her breath came in gasps, and she found herself suddenly brought back again to a consciousness of crime and of life in its present altered circumstances.

"If she knows," was her murmured comment on this painful suspicion, "then all is over between us. I can lay that dream of *love*, and friendship, and sisterhood aside for ever."

Then she tried to persuade herself that, with her wealth and power and personal qualities, she did not stand in need of the friendship of the Fullertons, that she was not dependent on any human creature for comfort or happiness; and she despised herself for the pangs which troubled her at the mere thought of losing Olivia. Pride was the lady's stumbling block to faith and salvation. She felt but would not know the emptiness of her own utterances, and spoke them aloud, and tried to feel as if the great master of transcendentalism had himself spoken them.

That day, the sixth from her father's departure, Sir Stanley Dashington sent up his card. "Urgent" was marked on it, and she went down to the drawing-room at once to meet him, arrayed in a half-mourning costume, her lips and cheeks faintly touched with rouge to hide the evidences of long suffering.

"I am delighted to see you, Sir Stanley," said she, with an assumed lightness of tone and manner. "Do you know, you are the first of my friends to call on me since my late misfortune."

"I am glad to have the honor," replied the

baronet, 'and I assure you I was sorry to hear of that calamity to which you refer. It is a pleasure to see that you bear it with proper resignation. Will you pardon me if I say that I have another burden to lay upon your shoulders, and if I ask you to use your womanly instinct and influence in a case interesting to yourself, and to me doubly interesting?"

"Olivia?" said the lady, with quick comprehension and a change of color as rapid and marked as rouge would permit.

"Olivia," the baronet answered, "whose mysterious behavior during the past week has thrown her brother and me into consternation. What do you think of a naturally lively young lady, given to pleasure, to visiting, shopping, and gossiping, who retires suddenly from the world, receives no visits and makes none, remains obstinately enclosed within four walls, loses her appetite and probably her sleep, grows in consequence pale, nervous, and hysterical, yet pretends all the time that there is nothing wrong, and won't submit to cross-examination from brother or friend?"

The symptoms were so much her own that, struck with the similarity, Nano remained silent long enough to collect her wits together and make a suitable reply.

"We must get at the causes, of course," she said at last. "There must be reasons for so startling a change in the young lady. Perhaps, Sir Stanley, a good part of the remedy is in your hands."

The baronet shook his head mournfully.

"Do you think, if it were, I would not have discovered it before now and have used it to advantage? I offered her all I had—myself—and would you credit the result, Miss McDonell?"

"That she refused?—no."

"Oh! she did not refuse. I would have been in

heaven now, if she had, or in Ireland. Nor did she consent. There were conditions, she said, and I must wait until circumstances in a certain case had decided one way or another. According to their going, so was mine to be. And the worst of it is, if I knew the circumstances I might give them the favorable turn; but I don't."

Again Nano was silent and disturbed. Could Olivia's distress be in any way connected with late events in her own household? It was difficult to see where any connection could exist, yet her mind, awaked to suspicion, was running after phantoms and hindered in its action by straws. She had forgotten the incident of the reception.

"I can suggest nothing, except that I go to her myself, and try to draw her from her seclusion and get her to confess the reason of this masquerading. In her case I can call it by no other name."

"Your plan is excellent, and the very one we wished to propose," said Sir Stanley. "In the doing of it I beg of you not to forget me."

"You have deserved too well of me to be forgotten."

"Accept my thanks; and when may we look for you? We are anxious that an end be put to this matter speedily."

"Ah! do not look upon my success as certain. I may fail more ignominiously than you. I shall go within two days."

"How can we ever thank you enough! Let me beg pardon for intruding upon you at such a time."

"You have done me a favor rather. I shall expect to see you soon again. Good morning."

They parted with very different sentiments regarding the gentle girl whose condition occasioned them so much alarm.

From the night of the carnival Olivia had not ventured to walk abroad. The doctor's poison had already worked through the circles of the city, and as a consequence callers dropped off one by one, invitations dwindled down to nothing, and bows were so cool and cuts direct so numerous that she gave up her walks altogether in fear of meeting any of her acquaintances. Her brother was so wrapped up in his profession as rarely to enter society, and she thanked Heaven for that, he was so quick to discover any change in the countenance of Dame Society. It was natural that the strain on her feelings should in a short time have an effect on her outward appearance. When she grew pale and heavy-eyed her brother wondered, commanded, scolded. When he saw her appetite failing, and discovered that she walked of nights or sat up in her room till the morning hours, he was positively furious; but neither affection or authority could move this obstinate maid, and she continued her downward and dissipating courses. He tried strategy, and failed. He suggested removal to fairer climate, and she refused to budge. In his despair, after consulting with the distracted Sir Stanley, he left the matter in the hands of Nano McDonell.

Olivia suffered still more under this well-meant persecution. Her object was to discover of herself, as Mrs. Strachan had directed, what papers or proofs her brother had of their legitimacy. If they were satisfactory the affair might be put in Harry's hands to be managed as he pleased, or Killany might be forced, through fear of an exposure, to retract his infamous slanders. If they were not, and none better could be obtained, Mrs. Strachan had no further advice to give. Her reticence was more suggestive than words. It meant social oblivion and disgrace for the Fuller-

tons. The intentional slight which had been put upon Harry the night of the carnival, and which he, poor fellow ! then misunderstood and afterwards forgot, delayed for a time her investigations. She was fearful of arousing his suspicions. He had suffered so much in his life that now, when Fortune seemed to smile on him, she dreaded anything occurring which might bring the care-worn lines into his handsome face again.

If it were possible she was determined to right the affair herself; but until matters had assumed a more tranquil appearance she did not venture to approach him on so delicate a subject. Continual anxiety, in the meantime, had brought about the change in her appearance. The doubt, and dread, and suspense of her position were harder to bear than actual disgrace, and she could not control her feelings or conceal them so thoroughly as Nano McDonell. And this elegant lady was another source of sorrow and anxiety for her tried heart. She did not exactly know what she feared. She was not sure of anything, and she hardly dared whisper to herself the awful suspicion which Nano's wild words and actions on a certain sad day had raised in her mind. A commission, of which her brother had been a member, had declared the merchant insane. She had not spoken to Harry about it. He seemed to take the affair as an ordinarily sorrowful event, and never alluded to it in a particular fashion. Yet the strange words of Mr. McDonell on that morning when in her presence he had accused his daughter of being his enemy; the authoritative airs of Killany, and Nano's remark that the man was distasteful but useful; and, lastly, Nano's demeanor and mysterious agony and self-accusation on the day of her father's departure for the asylum, were links in a chain

of premises whose conclusion forced itself upon her irresistibly, horror-stricken as she was at the thought of such unfaithfulness to her friend. That Nano, proud, beautiful Nano, could be guilty of so heinous a crime was almost impossible! And yet—and yet! The racking doubts never left her day or night, and an overpowering disgust for the friend who had loved and cherished her for many years began to steal into her heart. The dream of a union between her and Harry, formerly so pleasant and frequently indulged in, inspired her with the same feelings of revulsion. She wept over her unreasoning haste in thus condemning her friend unheard.

The opportunity of speaking to Harry on the all-important topic came at last on the evening of that day on which Sir Stanley had called upon Nano. Harry and she were sitting in the drawing-room, the doctor reading in high good-humor some magazine sketches, and she engaged with her sewing. Her thoughts were not on the reading, however, but on the conversation she was about to begin; and her heart beat almost to suffocation as the fated moment drew near. When the doctor had finished his article, and was commenting on it, she said in her quietest and most ordinary tone of voice:

“ You never told me about that commission, Harry, of which you were a member a week ago, in the case of Mr. McDonell.”

“ What was there to tell? ” said Harry, in bantering mood. “ You know the result. He went off to the asylum a few days later, and it was the safest place for him, I should judge.”

“ I know. But you never told me of your own interview with him, and how he acted, and all those little particulars.”

" You are after gossip, I see. Well, I was greeted by the gentleman precisely as you would like to greet Killany. He never looked at me. When I began to speak a change came over his face. He seemed like one struck with mortal fear, accused me of haunting him at night and of being in league with his daughter, and cried, ' Go, go ! ' until I was forced to leave from a fear that he would injure himself by his excitement. Nothing was plainer than his madness, although he went off to his prison with much dignity. His attacks may be only periodic. There is hope for him in that case."

" Poor Nano ! " sighed Olivia, much relieved, yet with doubt still tugging at her heart-strings. " To be so utterly alone ! "

" I know others that were left most utterly alone," said the doctor, with a shadow on his face, " and there wasn't so much as a drop of sympathy ever given them. You never knew father, or mother, or fortune, child."

" Ah ! but that fact makes my sorrow more easily borne," said this sweet diplomat, as if falling into a reverie. " How much I would give, though, to have a miniature of them, or a bit of writing, or some other memento ! "

" Our good, mysterious guardian," answered the doctor, savagely, " took care to remove all evidences of who and what we were, and several other things of equal value, if my child's memory serves me rightly."

" Do you remember *them*, Harry, and the guardian ? " she asked, with cunning indifference.

" Pretty well," he said musingly. " And we resemble our father mostly, for our mother was a dark-haired, sweet-eyed woman, very gentle, and loving, and commanding. She died very soon after our ar-

rival in New York. I have a dim, confused recollection of the street we lived on, and of one shady spot in particular where I took you every day and cried quietly over our dead mother and dying father. It amused you, a two-year-old, so much that you forgot your own sorrows and vigorous yelling, and put up your pretty baby-hands to catch the tears, and smooth and pet my wrinkled countenance. Boy-like, I laughed a minute later. Then a friend or relative came along, whom my father was very glad to see. He arranged matters, took all the papers and valuables, placed us a few hundred miles apart, and made himself invisible and unapproachable till this day. I would like to meet him."

"Do you think he took anything of value, Harry? Do you think there was anything of value to take?"

"I feel quite certain of it, and our guardian's manner since is conclusive. Why was he afraid to come forward as an honest man and claim his friend's children, whom he had voluntarily taken upon himself to support and educate? He has hidden like a thief. He gave us a good education out of funds that were not his own, I'll be bound, since it is unfair to suspect him of so much generosity. Then he sent us adrift. He concealed his name and residence, and was careful to keep all avenues to discovery closed. We are not of noble birth, nor the victims of a romantic episode, nor likely to trouble him for what was not owing to us from justice. Why, then, did he remain unknown except through fear that we might make it hot for him hereafter? He took away all hopes of proving our own position to the world as the children of a Mr. and Mrs. Fullerton, who came from a southern country where they had been married, and

died in New York. Olivia, we are not even sure of our names."

The color was not deep in her cheek at any time during these past few days, but it fled altogether at this crushing announcement. In vain she bent lower over her work to conceal the telltale expression of utter despair, and the pain that looked from her eyes. The doctor saw it, and, though excited in his grave way, mistook the cause of her emotion.

"There, I have frightened you," he said, with a sigh of relief, "and worked myself up to enthusiasm. But the consequences of our guardian's doings are not serious, and never will be. We shall get along quite as well, perhaps, as if burdened by exhaustive particulars with regard to our family. Perhaps our name was Sykes, or Wiggins, or Trigginbotham, or some other hideous combination of Anglo-Saxon roots, and our relatives might have been the veriest rascals that ever trod the earth. There is consolation to be derived from so fearful a negation as having no family."

She could not laugh at his absurd remarks. They had too much sorrowful meaning for her, lightly as they were uttered; but having recovered somewhat of her color and confidence, she asked:

"But if our good name were ever called in question, Harry? Suppose an instance in which we would be required to prove our legitimacy, and our relationship to those we call father and mother? If we were unable to do so would not the consequences then be frightful?"

"That is a different matter, and I have occasionally thought of it as a possibility. I have thought, too, of searching up the records, but want of time and want of money are great obstacles. And the search might prove fruitless. There was a neighbor in New

York who attended on our father and mother in their last moments, and might know many useful things. But is she alive or dead? Proving our right to the name we carry would be a difficult but not impossible matter. I even doubt if we could do it at all, unless under very favorable circumstances."

This was the judge's sentence. She said nothing, and an icy feeling seemed crowding around her heart as if to shut off from it all warmth and joy forever. There was, then, no answer for Killany's slanders, and before long Harry would learn the full force of the calamity that had befallen them. The love which she had cherished in her bosom for the bright, bold Irish baronet had become a thorn to rattle there; and as for her brother, he need never turn his thoughts again to the woman who had won his heart. The doctor was musing, and did not observe her silence or expression. Her pallor was deepening with every moment. Only the glow of the fire-light and the shadow in which she partly sat availed to hide her mortal agony from his eyes.

"Ah! but these troubles," he said at last, "are only visionary. They are nothing compared to those which have passed, or to those which are, and we can lay them aside until they present themselves. Olivia, I want your advice. My greatest trouble at present is that I am hopelessly in love."

"Have I not known that since the night on which I discovered the photograph you carried next your heart? If *she* knew that!"

"If she did," sighed he, "and appreciated it rightly, what a happy man this city would hold! I have hope."

"Of course. What lover has not, even where the differences are more telling? Income of the lover,

two thousand ; income of the lady, thirty thousand a year. According to reason, what are his chances?"

"Two out of thirty," he answered, "and that is very good."

"I have not compared your qualities with hers yet. Put them side by side, and what are your chances then?"

"Zero," he said humbly. "How you do pour on the cold water, Olivia!"

"It is best for you to know the worst before you feel it. I would not discourage you in your efforts, but do not be hasty. And now, if you will excuse, I will retire to bed. The clock is striking ten."

She had risen with averted face, put away her work, and tottered as far as the door, in hopes to escape without being observed.

"What a hurry you are in, when you know I wish to talk of the lady of my heart! Are you afraid that I shall make odious comparisons? What are you more than I that a baronet should stoop to honor you with a title and a rent-roll? Why could not Miss McDonell stoop to the poor physician as well?"

"The comparison does not exist," said she, opening the door. "I shall never marry Sir Stanley Washington."

The door closed, and he heard her steps die away on the stairs and in the upper hall ; and if ever a man was thunderstruck and completely overwhelmed it was Doctor Henry Fullerton.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT.

That the clouds are always heaviest before their breaking is one way of expressing a very trite consolation on occasions offered to the afflicted, but which has probably never been known to perform its office for any single individual. For just how heavy and black the moral clouds which hover around life's horizon can become is a matter of speculation even to those who have tasted life's sorrows to the utmost. We know that when a man is called on to endure for years a certain amount of suffering, when the agony has been piled on day after day and nature seems at its last gasp, at the right moment comes a break of some kind. The water, having risen to the brim of the vessel, flows over. The clouds, having heaped themselves on one another, break of their own weight. The break is very often a doubtful benefit. You find yourself looking for the silver lining of the cloud, or the proverbial turn in the lane, or the dawn which it is popularly supposed the deeper darkness foretold, and you are mightily disappointed. As a rule it rains for two or three days when the storm has been long fomenting, and he who is burdened with pain finds that it continues an interminable time after the summit of endurance has apparently been reached.

Aside from all reflections on the probable turning-point of misery stands the plain fact of Olivia's distress and sorrow. It had seized hold of her with the violent suddenness of a tornado, and was

ploughing through her nature after the same fashion, scattering ruin and devastation far and wide, and bringing dread fear into the three hearts that loved her most. But its very violence had doomed it to a short existence. To lose lover, friend, and good name within a few days is not often the lot of a young lady, although there are likely instances on record. So severe a succession of misfortunes is unnatural. Even at this moment Providence was interfering in her behalf, and its agent was the volatile, the unconquerable, the ubiquitous and omniscient Quip, sometime physician of doctor-making Michigan, and present confident and clerk of Doctor Killany. Providence is not partial in its employment of means and knows no distinction of persons. A civil war and a petty conflagration may serve equally well its purposes. Mr. Darwin, anxious as he is to make his remote ancestors baboons, would receive no less attention than the aristocrat who labors through his misty pedigree, sometimes vainly, in the hope of finding a man at the root, and who is indignant at the suggestion of his being slightly developed in intellect and too much so in his backbone. Mr. Quip was no better than his neighbors; in truth, it must be said he was considerably worse; but his wickedness did not stand in the way of his appointment to the office of liberating Olivia from her many woes. Mr. Quip had no suspicion that any other than himself was connected with the matter. He would scorn the idea that he was but the agent of another. He had thought his plan out by himself in the loneliness of the night or in the mid day silence of the office. Unless his eyes could reveal his thoughts he was certain that he had not revealed them to any one, even by an inadvertent soliloquy, and he was not given to walking or

talking in his sleep. What he knew but one other man living knew. Killany's knowledge was mostly pretence. McDonell alone held the secret. Killany had sold his knowledge to the latter, and the merchant was beyond buying and selling for ever.

"It was fortunate he escaped with his life," solilo quized Mr. Quip, half-conscious that if he had stood in Killany's shoes he would have used surer means of quieting the old gentleman than a lunatic asylum.

Mr. Quip was a Bohemian, like his master, but of a purer and more highly developed type. He stopped at nothing which the occasion or his own necessity demanded. His plans were bolder, his views more daring, penetrative, and far-reaching, his means more unscrupulous. He was not a success since he had chosen to go beyond the bounds of respectability. In many things, however, and in one particular thing, he was more than a match for Killany. He had overreached him in the Juniper affair, and had plunged more deeply into the secrets of the McDonell household. The extent of Mr. Quip's knowledge in this regard would have been alarming to some of our characters. He had used the sparing confidence which his master had placed in him to get possession of a groundwork of facts, inferences and surmises, working upon which he had obtained the secret of McDonell's life and had followed it out to its utmost ramifications. He had an eye on Juniper as the son of that woman who knew the Fullertons while they were in New York. He had interviewed the same lady. He had full knowledge of the parentage of the Fullertons and of their claims on the estate of McDonell, and he followed to the minutest particular the deep-laid plans of Killany. How he learned it all is at present unimportant. Dr.

Killany's cabinets were not a mystery to Mr. Quip, and he had the powers of a sleuth-hound in smelling out and pursuing a scent that promised heavy game. On that evening which witnessed the shattering of Olivia's last hope Mr. Quip was perched on the arm of his chair, debating the question to which of the rival parties would he be the more useful and costly. Olivia's fate hung for a time in the balance.

"On the principle," said Mr. Quip, "that rats desert a sinking ship I shall steer clear of our friends Killany and McDonell. The truth must come out sooner or later, and I am impelled to assist in bringing it out sooner through a regard for my personal safety. I have a presentiment that Killany would not hesitate to poison me or have me flung from the long dock, if he knew what I know about his doings. It is not often I do tell the truth, it must be confessed, and on moral grounds I don't receive much credit for telling it now. Still, there is no denying of the fact that I might conceal it if I wished, and get paid as well. But I might not be so safe in the long run. Yes, I shall sell my services and my knowledge to the Fullertons."

A knock at the office door cut short his soliloquy. Whether the sound was familiar and he knew the person without, or from some other inscrutable cause, Mr. Quip, instead of rushing to the door, calmly opened his book and paid no further attention to external incidents. Presently Mr Juniper made his appearance with a white face and ominous frown. He stood at the door, and, making an opera-glass of his hands, surveyed his friend from top to toe in contemptuous silence, turning his head on one side and clucking like a hen in spiteful allusion to Mr. Quip's sobriquet of the "Hawk." This had no effect

on the interested student, and Mr. Juniper, who evidently came with an object, was compelled to open the conversation. Flinging a missile which knocked the book from Quip's hands, he sat down.

"Well?" said Quip coolly, without glancing at him.

"Well," mimicked Juniper as well as his growling voice would permit, "my wealthy friend, you are becoming more studious the more gold you have flung into your pockets."

"I am become a man of leisure," returned Mr. Quip, with an owlish, upward turn of his eyes, "and men of leisure with any pretensions to taste are devoted to books and to fine arts."

"They've got an acquisition in you," growled Juniper, "these men of leisure. I'd like to know what fine arts you pay attention to outside of lying and cheating."

"There is music, for one. I am studying the guitar," continued Mr. Quip, giving a pantomime of having the instrument in his hands, and at the same time studiously avoiding his friend's wicked glances, "and I expect to make a hit at the next symposium. I always had a great taste for music. I began at three years old by tearing up my mamma's music. At four I had dissected several mouth-organs, and there is a tradition that at five I played the hand-organ. That is doubtful, however. Genius may go far, but never so far as that, Juniper."

"None of your chaff," said Juniper. "You know what I came here for, and you may as well pony up straight. Are them dollars that I spoke of forthcoming?"

Mr. Quip put his hands to his ears in horror.

"You are not only slangy, Juniper, but you are ungrammatical. This is abominable, more especially

for you, who live among kings and queens, and retired greatness generally, at the asylum."

The disgusted listener stood up defiantly, with his hands in his pockets, while Quip was speaking. When the "Hawk" had finished there was such an ominous quiet about him that Quip's unwilling, beady, treacherous eyes were forced to turn themselves upon him.

"Have you done?" said he.

"Hardly, Juniper. Wouldn't you like to hear me play on the guitar? Wouldn't you wish for just five minutes to have your senses borne on a gushing stream of music into an elysium of sensual delights? You don't get such chances at the asylum. There is little music there, and it is all staccato and not distinguished for its melody."

"Have you done?" said again the immovable youth, without a sign of relenting.

"Well I must say that I have—almost. It is very discouraging that I can find no way of rendering your call pleasant. But when you must talk at a man, and can elicit nothing in return, I would rather sit by the sea on the long wharf—"

"Don't mention that, for God's sake!" cried Juniper, putting his trembling hands before his eyes. "I have dreamed of it often enough since to make my hair white."

"How did you come to be gifted with so much imagination, Juniper? It is a superfluity, a cancer, to a man so fond of gold and whiskey as you."

"Give me my money," cried Juniper angrily—"give me my money and let me go, so that I may never see your face again."

"Will you be rid ever of seeing it?" said Quip, with a sneering laugh. "When you part from me it will haunt you for ever."

He shook his bony finger, and wagged his elfish head, and rolled his cruel eyes at Juniper in a way that made the superstitious man tremble at the knees and turn all the colors of the rainbow. Juniper began to swear frightfully, and heaped the oaths on Quip's head until the latter sprang up, caught him by the throat, and thrust him into a chair.

"Sit there, fool," he said, "and hear what I say to you on this matter for the last time. How much money did you get from me for your lying testimony?"

"Seventy-five dollars," said Juniper submissively.

"How much were you at first promised?"

"One hundred and fifty."

"Fifty per cent., gone from the original sum," laughed the daring Quip—"ten per cent. for my services, five per cent. for your first insolences, and the remaining thirty-five for your snivelling threats of exposure. You paltry idiot! you received one hundred per cent. more than you deserved for your services. I could have hired less troublesome and more useful men at five dollars a head, but that I wished, forsooth, to befriend you. How much more do you expect to get, yon grasping miser? Seventy five dollars you say. What modesty! What disinterestedness! I shall give yon one cent. There it is, and go."

He flung the coin at him with superb scorn, adding: "And look that it does not poison you."

Juniper had always a superstitious dread of his elfish friend, and his present manner and words did not tend to diminish the feeling. He humbly picked up the cent, much to Quip's surprise, and began to retire. At the door he stopped and looked back. Quip was laughing as the charlatan laughs over the credulity of his victims, with his hands to his sides and his face purpled in the effort to restrain his mirth. This gratui-

tous scorn broke the spell and roused all the courage that was left in Juniper's breast. With another series of oaths he flung back the coin at the giver and declared his immediate intention of revealing all that he knew of the late conspiracy to Miss McDonell. Then he departed.

"Which makes it all the more necessary," soliloquized Mr. Quip, referring to Juniper's proposed treason, "that I at once proceed to the right party. Events are thickening. The air is full of portents and omens. If I don't coin some of them into gold, then farewell to all my greatness. I have not got into my proper sphere to make myself as great an ass as I did in others."

When Dr. Fullerton was returning home the next day after office hours, Quip accosted him mysteriously in the hall.

"Will you be at home to-night," he asked, "and prepared to receive visitors?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so," said the puzzled doctor. "Why do you ask?"

"I am going to call," Quip replied, "and I want to have a little conversation with you on family matters. There is some money in it, and I am anxious to get a share."

"You speak in enigmas, Quip."

"I'll speak literally to-night. You will understand that I come to talk of family matters and gold, and you will be at home."

He slipped away into the waiting-room, leaving a mystified gentleman on the stairs. The doctor did not think it necessary to speak to Olivia about their visitor until he had arrived and was seated owlishly in the drawing-room. Mr. Quip was more bird like than ever in his motions, and set Olivia laughing at

his queer fashion of sitting on the edge of his chair and twisting his whole head around to look at an object. But Mr. Quip's first deliberate and chosen words, after he had been introduced by the doctor, rudely drove all merriment out of doors.

Said he: "I come to sell to you for a fair price a clear knowledge of your antecedents, the means of getting again the property which a slippery guardian stole from you, and of establishing you in your proper position before the world."

Olivia trembled, and the doctor, less susceptible, only smiled. The magnitude of Mr. Quip's design was equalled only by the assurance with which he declared his ability to execute it, and, though surprise was uppermost, incredulity and distrust were the ruling feelings in the doctor's mind.

"You are going to attempt a great deal, Mr. Quip," he said quietly, yet anxious to tell the man he was mad and to drive him from the room.

"I have had remarkable opportunities," returned the gentleman modestly, "and I have used them. I know," he continued, "that you are surprised and not inclined to believe in extraordinary good fortune. But what I propose is simply this: I have the certificate of marriage of your father and mother. I can point out to you the man who took your father's money. I can prove that your father had this money and that your guardian stole it. I have my witnesses and documents, and they are so strong that no court can break them down. You are worth some three hundred thousand dollars, and for putting you in possession of it I ask the sum of five thousand dollars, not to be paid until you have come into possession of your own."

This was open and decided, and the doctor found

it impossible to maintain his scepticism and his composure. Olivia was pale and quite frightened at the prospect of becoming an heiress.

“I know,” continued Mr Quip, “that my proposal is somewhat astonishing and my demand perhaps a trifle large—”

“No, oh! no,” cried impulsive Olivia, and the doctor said gravely:

“If you can do all you say it is little enough for the service. Before we accept your offer we must consult with friends; before we can even consent to examine your statements we must take means to secure ourselves from imposition.”

“Here is a pledge of my faith and earnestness,” said Quip, placing a paper on the table. “It is the marriage certificate. I give it to you as an earnest of what is to come.”

The orphans read it with varying emotions. To Olivia it was the blessed shore after long tossings on the stormy ocean, and her heart was filled with a noble gratitude to Him who had brought her safely out of the tempest.

“The name on this certificate is Hamilton,” said the doctor suspiciously.

“It is a part of my work to prove you both Hamiltons,” Mr Quip said, rising to go. “I must bid you good evening and leave you to meditate on my proposals. I may expect an answer—”

“In two or three days,” said Harry. And Mr. Quip departed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST FRUITS.

The social atmosphere after the consummation of the long-planned scheme of McDonell's incarceration possessed for Dr. Killany a clearness and brightness that for many a day it had not known. He was no longer in the maze of a conspiracy, meditating, struggling, hoping, fearing, filled with chagrin one moment, too lifted with hope the next; and although there was yet much to do and more to be troubled about, still the great obstacle was removed; he could breathe, and wait with comparative indifference for whatever fate was destined to follow. He was manager of Nano's estate in conjunction with two nonentities. That position his intriguing had assured him. It was imperative that one who had made himself so important and necessary a factor in late events should have an immediate reward, which would not bear the outward character of a price and yet be quite as substantial. He held his office by virtue of his conventional relationship, the world said. Nano knew as well as he that it was the sop to Cerberus, the opiate to still dangerous importunings and outbreaks, and both appreciated it accordingly. It occurred to her often, and not vaguely, but impertinently clear, that he was looking for higher emoluments—her hand in marriage, perhaps. She had never taken pains to let him understand the hopelessness of his expectations. If he wanted money a fair fifty thousand was at his

disposal when she came into the property. Considering what he knew and what he was able and unable to do, this was heavy compensation ; but she did not intend to offer it at any time. He might ask for it himself. She knew that to one of his disposition this was but a drop in the bucket. That, however, was not her affair. He might choose to be troublesome, She was prepared for that emergency likewise, and was ready to dismiss him at the first sign of insubordination. It never caused her a moment of pain or alarm. She could do many brave, dangerously brave things, and one of them was to resist, and even attack, so deadly, so ravenous, so disgusting an animal as this scheming doctor.

The doctor himself spent many quiet hours communing on this very subject. It was now the nearest to his heart. He had time and was lavish of it, and he thought with leisurely care and diligence on his next move. He had, no doubt, passed the most dangerous period of his scheme ; he was now to pass the most delicate. If boldness and skill were needed in the first instance, unequalled diplomacy and gentle cunning were now the requisite qualities. He had to admit to himself—and with himself he was the most candid, least flattering man in existence—that the outlook was not cheering. She had not the slightest affection for him. Her manner very frequently savored of dislike and disgust, and she was always distant, cold, haughty, repelling. These feelings had deepened since the crime of her life had been consummated. It was natural that the one person who knew of her sin should be looked at with eyes of distrust when previous love was not in the question. He had it in his power to show to blind admirers the crack in the perfect vase, the flaw in the long-prized diamond, the rot-

tenness of the sepulchre which seemed a miracle of art and nature. He rejoiced in it that it gave him control over her, so haughty and daring in her fall; and it pained him, too, that she should know and feel her bondage, as it lessened the chances of affection towards himself. He loved her, indeed, as much as he ever could love at all. His heart and his interests were inseparable. Where both went together his passion was honorable and strong. What hopes did he cherish of ever attaining to the perpetual control of the noble estate which lay temporarily in his hands? He could hardly tell. The possibility of failure so confused the clear-headed Bohemian that for some days he dared not discuss the question.

What if her heart belonged to another? There could be no serious obstacle in such an event, since interest, according to Killany's philosophy, was infallibly stronger than love. If from pure malice, dislike, or pettishness the lady still refused to look to her own welfare—rejected him, in fact—it was not to be supposed that he would bring his own name into infamy for the sake of revenge. But he had for the last desperate condition a remedy which, if decidedly hurtful to the other party, would be of the highest benefit to himself.

His scheming was as patent to Nano as if he had traced it on paper for her amusement. Like the garrison of a beleaguered city, she watched with interest the gradual advances of the enemy; the contracting of the lines; the building of forts and batteries; read hopefulness, nay, certainty, of success in the besieger's eyes; felt the anticipation of triumph in his cautious and seductive manner. She actually led him on to his doom. In the first days of her trial she had foreseen that herself might be the subject of Killany's

demands. His manner during these two weeks which succeeded a never to-be-forgotten morning had confirmed her suspicions and made conjecture fact. She yielded to the stream, was gracious and kind always, and waited indifferently for the hour when, with a relentless and determined hand, she would demolish the fabric of his dreams as completely as he thought of destroying hers if she refused to listen to his solicitations. She was fully conscious of the power which he held, but was also sure that it was not absolute, and that enough remained to her to limit it within proper grounds. She was resolute that she would not be the slave of her crime, a modern lamp which, at the rubbing of the medical Aladdin, would bring her humbly to his knees.

Two weeks of patient working and waiting the doctor gave himself. Then he judged the proper moment to have come, and on one evening, at the hour which in good society is supposed to be given only to familiar friends, he set out for McDonell House with the intention of offering himself to the mistress as a husband of superfine quality. It was an unparticular evening, distinguished by its wintry bleakness and loneliness. A lover would have noted, perhaps, every feature of the time in which he was to stake his present happiness on the yes or no of a woman, that in after-years no incident of the night or day might be omitted in the picture of brightness or misery. Killany was not actually so nervous as to the result. It was purely a gaming transaction, and any turn of the die was to be met with philosophical composure. Disappointment was not going to break his heart. Failure was with him only a possibility. He had made provision, however, for the possibility, and he had in any event a safe retreat. In

one quarter of the city through which he passed, famous for its dirty children and brutish men, there seemed to exist some great but sudden excitement. Knots of idlers on the corners, stalwart and mannish women in the doorways, discussed in low, earnest tones on some topic, and so interested were they that Killany's dainty, perfumed passing earned neither a look nor a comment from them.

"A fight, is it?" he said to a heavy-browed, brutish boy.

"A fight it be, perhaps," answered the surly lad, "but it an't begin yet as I knows of."

The doctor proceeded leisurely on his way and was soon at McDonell House.

The conversation promised to be interesting and as artificial as the chatting of two diplomats intent on gaining admissions from each other and not quite sure of opposing methods. It was a game of skill in which neither party was to be ultimately beaten. Nano knew from Killany's manner that the important hour had arrived, and rejoiced exceedingly. The doctor saw and understood her feelings partly, knew that he no longer had a secret, and was anxious to plunge into his business without delay. The usual fencing took place, however, and the regular skirmishings which always precede a great battle. He touched upon the main point when he said :

"I never call lately without a matter of business which requires your attention. I have one for you to-night. You will learn to shudder at my footstep or at the sound of my voice, either is so apt to suggest disagreeable ideas."

"Business," said she in return, "has rather an interest for me, and, provided you do not come too often or give me too difficult problems to solve, I

shall not learn to dread footstep or voice any more than I dread them at this moment. And I dread them now not at all," she added, because he looked at her as if there were a double meaning in her words.

"Well, you are very kind, Nano, and I promise you that in this affair I shall never trouble you again, unless at your own wish. The fact is, I wish to make you my wife. I offer you myself and my estate. The full value of both you understand, and I do not think it necessary to expatiate on my devotion. Time will show that very plainly."

The murderer was out, and she had remained as indifferent as if he had proposed a sleigh-ride, looking straight into his face, while he spoke, with her frank, sweet eyes.

"You are calm, very calm, doctor, over this matter. I had heard it was the custom—but everything one hears is not true."

"I might remark, too," said Killany, with inward uneasiness, "that you are as calm as myself. I love you, but I have no wish to gush over what should be a plain matter of business. That I have loved you for years is clear to you, but, being poor, I did not presume to show it. Still, if you require assurances——"

"Oh! none; I require none. They would not sway me one way or the other. My mind has been made up on this matter since I first discovered your intention of letting your heart run away with your head. I did not think you could be guilty of such a thing."

"Indeed!" he said, not quite sure if she were laughing at him.

"I am glad that we can have an understanding at this early date," she went on glibly. "It will make

our business relations less constrained in the future. I do not like to live with a cloud over my head ready to burst upon me, yet never bursting."

"Ah! you are going to refuse me," he murmured, with a quiver, of pain in his voice quite touching from its very unexpectedness.

"You might have expected it. Yes, I refuse. Gratitude is not love, you know; and grateful enough as I am to you for your services, I cannot make your reward as you would wish."

"You believe, then, in that folly—love. And have you considered—alas! I know that you have. And yet am I not a dangerous person to be permitted to stray from your side?"

"Dangerous?" she answered smilingly. "I cannot think so. I would as soon accuse you of a desire to bite yourself as to bite me."

"Some animals do both when hard pressed, Nano."

"That sounds like a threat, doctor, of which I know you would never be guilty. As you said yourself, this is a pure matter of business given to me to settle. I have settled it, and you may accept your fate kindly or not. We shall continue to be very good friends, and shall take up and lay aside other businesses as gracefully. If it is any consolation to you to know that I refuse you from inclination, and not from affection for any other, take it. It is not much, but it will save you from jealousy until the force of this disappointment wears off."

He was silent for some minutes. He could not decide upon what course to adopt in this unexpected turn of affairs. She was not defying him, he thought, and yet her cool, friendly manner might hide the cunningest dissimulation. She was a puzzle to him still, and it vexed him to think how completely he was baf-

fled. This was not the conversation he had planned, nor had his and this a shadow of resemblance. A bitterness rushed over him that she should act as if dealing with a very ordinary event, and not as if her very existence was concerned.

“I am adverse to creating a scene—”

“Why should you think of that?” she said sharply.

“But, to tell the truth, I expected something different, not on the strength of my services, but of my knowledge. There is no money could pay me for that, and I hoped it was understood that my services were given in the hope of receiving yourself some day as a reward. I am tempted not to let you go. Do I not know enough to make it necessary for you to marry me?”

“No,” she answered boldly. “There is no man on earth could force me to that. The alternatives might be disgrace and ruin, as they are not in this instance, but I could endure both.”

“As they are not in this instance?” he repeated significantly, as if communing with himself. She laid one delicate hand impressively on his arm.

“Let us understand one another, doctor, at once and forever. I will never marry you. Bury your dangerous knowledge in that fact. It is more to your interest to accept our present relations than to attempt anything like an exposure of our recent doings. We shall not discuss what it is in your power or mine to do, but let it be conceded that just now we are evenly matched, and that only very favorable circumstances may make us open enemies in the future. Make out when you please the amount to which your services are entitled, and it shall be paid. Then we cry, Quits. What do you say? Remember, I shall never marry you, whatever be the alternative. Be guided accordingly.”

He listened with increasing despair, wonder and admiration. She was a little more earnest than at the beginning of the conversation, but still business-like and indifferent. There was determination in her looks, in her tones, and a world of it in her words, and he was forced unwillingly to believe that she spoke as she felt. It was all over with his planning and scheming on that line of action. He had hoped to fall into the possession of a beautiful wife and a fine fortune, and to take his stand forever on a solid and assured basis of respectability and wealth. The game was against him. He yielded, as the gambler yields, with philosophic heroism, and took up again the old and never-to-be-shaken-off Bohemian life.

"Let it be as you say," he said quietly, and, after refusing an invitation to dinner, took his leave. Out in the streets, in that same quarter which had shown a trifling disturbance an hour before, unwonted excitement reigned. Workmen home from the day's labors now formed the corner throngs, and the talk was louder and quite violent.

"In a few days, lads," he heard one say boastingly, "and if one dares to show his head we'll split it though an army tried to save him."

He paid little attention to their language, so deeply was he thinking of his own misery.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ASYLUM.

In affliction the weak soul goes to the bottom, however strong may be its physical casing, but the soul of the brave grows only stronger from its conflict with the storm. And the brave soul is he whose courage springs from the bosom of God; who puts on the

armor of a divine patience to battle with his foes; who offers submission to the fury of the blast, bending, but not breaking; who is powerful with the consciousness of living faith, the knowledge that, though he may be harrowed and ploughed with anguish and wrong and misery, bent down in slavery before the eyes of the world, there is yet One who will crown him as a victor when the struggle is over, even while the crowd are applauding his conquerors and deeming him the poorest wretch that ever perished.

McDonell the madman had put on the armor of this patience, and thanked God, as the dark asylum gates closed behind him, that the divine will had taken this violent means to bring him mercifully to his senses again. For his eyes were at last opened, and the wicked malice of his late tamperings with justice and grace seemed scarcely less heinous to him than the crime which had indirectly brought about all his wanderings from the truth. His whole life now stood out before him mountain-like, and the prospect was not cheering. If he were not prepared against melancholy and gloom of any kind, the dark deed of spoliation in his early life, his desertion of his faith, his carelessness towards his wife, and his criminal neglect of his own child would have pressed him into the shadow of death with the anguish of remorse. The opportunity had again been given him, for a last time perhaps, of repenting and atoning for these misdeeds. With the eagerness of a true penitent he seized on the means of salvation, determined to bear every trial with a sublime patience until such time as it pleased God to release him by death or otherwise from his imprisonment. One thing he thought upon most frequently and hugged to his heart with a fond conviction of its coming to pass: he

would find means to restore the property he had stolen. God would give him that happiness, for he prayed hourly for the favor. Yet not one word against his daughter would ever escape him, not one act which would endanger her or cause her a moment's undeserved pain. He would win his freedom, as he had lost it, legally, and the physicians who pronounced him mad should pronounce him sane.

With such thoughts and prayers and resolutions he heard the great gates clang behind him. He thanked God in his heart for the wretchedness which had come upon him with the violence of a tempest, for tempests purify the air and leave the earth prettier than before. The gloomy walls of the asylum, with their barred windows, were in sight as they drove up the winding avenue, and he could not resist the involuntary chill which ran through his body when his eyes first rested on them. His determination soon overcame that. His body was weak from disease, and would not obey the iron will that ruled so easily in days of health. Yet he schooled his countenance and his heart, that the one might possess resignation and tranquillity and the other express them clearly. The portals of the establishment were open to receive him, and the officials were waiting there to confer upon him the honor of a formal reception as befitting his importance in the world. Everything that could offend the sensitive nerves of the mad was absent. The wide halls, polished, echoing, and rank with the smell which prevails in all these institutions, could not, however, be got rid of, and they gave another chill to the old man who with trembling step descended from the carriage. His slim, stately form, graceful yet, and honorable with its coronet of silver hair; his handsome,

shrewd, manly features, beaming just then with affected cheerfulness ; his calm, commanding eye, clear, steady, and reasonable enough to give any but practised ones no doubt of his sanity, made an evident impression on those who saw him. He noticed it himself with a great bounding of the heart, careful, too, that no sign of extraordinary emotion should escape him.

It is not a pleasant office which the chief of an asylum has to welcome a patient of a mildly insane disposition, with reason enough to understand the peculiarities of his case and resent any familiarities. Dr. Stirling had never found the office more difficult than in the present instance ; and as his patient offered him no occasion for any extended remarks, he was forced to content himself with the ordinary salutations between host and guest in every day life. The gentleman's manner was neither hurried nor slow, and had about it no unusual flourishes. He took the whole proceeding as a matter of fact, talked with the courtesy and gentleness of a sane man, and altogether so behaved himself that the officials were left in considerable doubt as to the man they had to deal with. The superintendent, desirous of having some manifestations of insanity, took him first into his own apartment and introduced him to his wife and daughter. Luncheon was just taking place, and the patient sat down with them, forcing himself to take a little tea and eat a few tidbits, though his appetite revolted against the food, and to talk with the gravity and cheerfulness becoming one of his years. How hard it was to do that little ! What sobs he smothered as he sat there, what bursts of rage and grief he controlled, as incident after incident reminded him of the liberty he had lost and the misery he had won ! He

would not allow himself to think of these things. He restrained even the ordinary freedom of his manner through fear of appearing too gay of disposition for an old man. He was a good conversationalist, and used his powers now to great advantage, venturing even to talk of the asylum and the peculiarities of its crazy inmates.

“ You have a little paradise here,” he said, looking around the sitting room, “ and one that I would not expect to find in this neighborhood. Are you never troubled with the cries of the inmates, or other disagreeable sounds that must be heard within these walls ?”

“ Oh! never,” the doctor said, glad to have his patient himself come to the point he was so anxious to touch upon. “ The more violent cases are too far from this part of the building to occasion us any disturbance. Mrs. Stirling could not endure such a trial. Your apartments are not distant from these, and we shall always be happy to have the pleasure of your company. What do you say, Trixy ?”

“ Why, papa,” answered his daughter, a sprightly young lady of eighteen, “ I am charmed with Mr. McDonell already, and I should be very sorry if after this we were to see no more of him.”

“ Thank you, young lady,” said the complimented; “ I am very much pleased at your good-will towards me. Are you not afraid to trust yourself much in the company of those who are mad ?”

“ As for that,” answered the doctor, “ Trixy is the angel of the institution, and can intrude where others often fear to go.”

“ Besides,” said Trixy, with a blush for her own boldness, “ you are too much of a cavalier ever to do harm to a young lady.”

"Ah! you have already so well read me that you begin to flatter. I confess I am helpless in a coaxing woman's hands."

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Stirling, "that your gray hairs will not save you from the experiencing of Trixy's humors. She is an outrageous flirt, has half the asylum at her feet, receives proposals every day, and does so many graceless things that you would be surprised to know them all. Do be careful, sir, in dealing with her."

"Ah! that I shall," said Mr. McDonell. "Yet I can scarcely be responsible if some day I should go on my knees to her. I am eligible almost, or hope to be in time; and there is something poetic, if curious, in the union of May and December."

"Too poetical ever to come to pass," laughed Trixy, and then they rose from the table.

"I do not believe you are mad," whispered the impulsive girl as he was leaving to follow the superintendent to his own apartments. He would have thanked her with a mad, feverish gratitude for that blessed declaration; but recalling himself, he only smiled, saying with a shrug of the shoulders:

"Have you not seen the commission of lunacy? Four learned and eminent physicians signed their names to that document, and, whatever I may have been before, I am surely mad now. Ah! young lady, do not let your likings run away with your reason, as mine did."

And he smiled again, and spoke with such a gentle sarcasm that the young lady was more than ever persuaded of his sanity.

The rooms assigned to him at the asylum were furnished as became his position and the state of his reason—three apartments decked out with taste and

luxury, containing books and means of amusement in abundance, with every appointment that belonged to the suite of a modern wealthy gentleman. The cage was gilded enough to suit any captive. But its bars showed all the more for the elegance so inconsistent with their ugliness. The sun threw their shadows against the red curtains with mournful significance for him. Yet his hopeful heart did not fail him, and he expressed his satisfaction to the doctor, and looked through the hateful window out on a wild bit of lake scenery frozen and snow rimmed as his own life.

" Whenever it pleases you to dine with our family," said the doctor, " remember that the hour is five and that you are always welcome; otherwise your meals will be sent up to you at your request. A valet has been sent, whose office it is to attend upon you. And I would caution you to avoid as much as possible the other parts of the asylum. The sights are not cheering, and would not have the best effect on your delicate health. You will find in your neighbors amusement enough for years of leisure.

" Thank you, doctor. I shall follow your instructions, and shall avail myself of your invitation to dine with you every day. If my valet has arrived I beg that you will let him come to me immediately."

The doctor withdrew, and presently the man whom his enemies had employed as valet appeared. The sight of him instantly confirmed his suspicion that this valet was but a paid spy. He was a carefully-dressed individual, a Scotchman, with some evidences of good breeding about him, but hard and forbidding in feature. To this humiliation the merchant also submitted. It was part of his punishment, and he was anxious to suffer even unto death.

" Your name?" he said curtly.

“Alexander Buchan—commonly called Sandy.”

“Well, Sandy, I suppose you understand your business. The first thing I shall require of you is that you will keep out of sight until I send for you, and these rooms are forbidden to you during my absence from them.”

“I understand, sir,” said Sandy, bowing himself out of his presence.

McDonell knew very well that Sandy’s chief office would be to keep his eye on him and to have cognizance of everything of importance going on ; but he thought it well to limit at once his range of excuses, and confine his powers of deviltry to the narrowest possible scope.

He was settled at last, caged, imprisoned—in the eyes of men, made mad. And, after all, the bitter draught was not so bitter as he had imagined. In that very home of despair sympathy met him at the doors, and walked with him through its dreary halls, and consoled him with its sweet assurance in his sanity. He looked out of the prison windows across the waste of forest and ice that stretched to the horizon. The sun lay like a veil of tissue over its dreariness, softening the rougher places, hiding the meanest, and giving a wild beauty to the homely scene. Its warm radiance fell around him, and kissed his white hair and trembling hands as a daughter should have done, and brought new strength to his heart. It seemed as if God were looking down upon him with a great, resistless eye, applauding his resignation and his penitence, bidding him be of good cheer and have the will to suffer on for His sake and his own. Overcome, he raised his eyes and his hands heavenwards and prayed for his daughter—prayed that she might be saved from the evil consequences of her sin and his neglect, that

God might be to her the father which he had not been, and, pitying her misfortune and her ignorance, bring her to faith and repentance. Thus ended the first day at the asylum.

Early next morning, when his breakfast and his valet had both been dismissed, and he was preparing for a ramble about the institution, his door opened and a tall, dignified lady entered. She had a gilt crown on her head, a sceptre in her hand, and a veil reaching to her feet about her form, and was preceded by a stout, merry looking gentleman in corduroys. The latter carried an umbrella, and a handkerchief which he was constantly applying with great care and gentleness to his nose. He bowed profoundly to McDonell, winking and smiling, and announced in a loud, dignified tone :

“ Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland.”

This apparition would have set McDonell a-laughing but for the serious expression of Her Majesty’s countenance and the warning gestures of the merry-looking attendant, who still applied his handkerchief, and, being compelled to stand where the sun shone on him, hoisted his umbrella with great dignity and waited the proceeding of events. The lady stretched out her sceptre towards McDonell, who kissed it respectfully.

“ Gracefully done,” said she. “ You have been bred in courts, I am certain, though I cannot recall having seen your face during my short and mournful reign. You are aware, then, that it is not etiquette for a queen to visit her subjects ; but knowing your inexperience in the rules of this vile institution, I thought it proper to concede a point or two until you had become better acquainted with us.”

McDonell said that he was highly honored.

"Some day," she went on, "you shall know how I was deprived of my throne by an impostor who rules in my name. Perhaps you may help me to recover my rights, though I see that, like myself you are a prisoner here, perhaps unjustly so; for you have not the usual appearance of a mad person any more than myself. I assure you of our royal favor."

McDonell thanked her again for her kindness.

"You see," she whispered, becoming more familiar and more forgetful of her royal dignity, "though you may not be aware of it, they are all crazy here, even the doctor and his wife, although I may make an exception for his daughter. This little fellow here is such a fool as to believe his nose is made of sugar. I have tweaked it often enough to prove the contrary; but you see he still holds to the opinion, and uses a handkerchief to keep off moisture, his umbrella to keep off the sun, and for the world he wouldn't wash his face or go out in the rain. The very thought throws him into agonies."

"How very strange, your Majesty!"

"What are *you* here for?" said Her Majesty sharply.

"I was too lavish with my money, ma'am."

"A very grave fault, but not necessarily springing from insanity. I suppose they have invented new forms of the disease since I was last in the world."

"Very many," said McDonell, checking a rising indignation.

"Ah! well, I pity you from my heart. You do not look or act crazy. Be assured of our royal favor."

She gave him her hand to kiss, and departed with her attendant, who came back directly to disabuse

his mind of any impression the royal lady might have left there concerning him.

"She is hopelessly mad," said the little gentlemen, with an application of his handkerchief, "and I humor her. We all humor her, in fact, and I am her lord high chamberlain. She probably told you about my nose. It's my weak point. My friends tried to persuade me that I was infatuated—darn the whole lot of 'em! They would get me into the rain, and would try to souse my nose with water, regretting only that my whole head wasn't sugar. I am afraid of that calamity, but by care and the virtue in this silk kerchief I think I can keep the disease from spreading. Well, when I wouldn't be persuaded my friends sent me here. All the loons of this institution laugh at me, of course. Each one is sure that his neighbors are the mad people of the place. I could not tell you in an hour all their tricks to wet my nose. I woke up once in time to catch Victoria preparing to moisten my nose. Another built quite a bonfire under it. All of 'em threaten, if the establishment runs short of sugar, to soak it for general use. They would do it, sir, and I visit the kitchen daily to see that sugar is not wanting. The doctor, who is the only one with any belief in the fact, and that dear sprite of his, Trixy, have issued very, *very* stern prohibitions against any interference with my nose. Now, my dear sir, what do you think of it? I would like to have your opinion."

"It certainly has not the appearance of sugar," replied McDonell, "but appearances are deceptive. If you would kindly allow me to feel it—"

"Oh! by all means, dear sir; only be sure that there is no moisture on your fingers, and handle it carefully."

After the examination had been cautiously proceeded with, "Your nose is sugar, or of a similar substance, I think," said the merchant.

"Sugar, or of a similar substance," repeated the delighted gentleman—"the doctor's very words! What a remarkable coincidence! I must tell him of it immediately. But, pray sir, are you crazy?"

"Well, a number of physicians so decided, and it was the general belief of those who knew me. For myself I cannot say, since in matters of that kind outsiders are the best judges."

"Give me your hand, sir," cried the little gentleman warmly. "If there is a sane individual here besides myself and the doctor and Trixy, it is you. Such modesty. Such confidence in the judgment of others! Sir, my judgment is that you are as sane as myself or the doctor, and I put it against the world. Why, the maddest of the fools in this house is the loudest in swearing to his own sanity. I am happy to know you, and, if you wish, I shall introduce you to our circle as my particular friend."

"You honor me too much, and I shall be glad to avail myself of your invitation. Shall we go immediately?"

"Straight, sir. We have a room at the other end—the gentlemen, I mean—where we assemble to spend our hours of leisure in the cold weather. The ladies have another apartment. Twice a week we have reunions in the doctor's pleasant domicile, and every Saturday a meeting of our literary society. You must join it, my dear sir. A man of your sound sense would not surprise me by attaining to the presidency. We are very amicable as a rule, although I must admit there was a little indignation when an obstinate old fool, who fancies that he carries some other body's

head on his shoulders, wrote an essay to prove that my nose was solid flesh. Oh-h-h!"

At this point the little gentleman jumped through the door of the room with a yell of terror so keen in its anguish that every nerve in McDonell's body tingled with fright. Before he could follow to learn the cause of this singular proceeding his friend returned to the threshold, peeped cautiously in, with his handkerchief to his nose and his umbrella ready for action, and whispered:

"Wasn't it water, my dear, dear sir—wasn't it water?"

"Not at all," said McDonell, much relieved and decidedly angry.

"Well, well, what a nervous creature I am! You must have been astonished at the rudeness of a lord high chamberlain. But consider to what I am subjected daily, and you will not wonder at my alarm. We shall now go to see our friends."

They went together through the halls to the room where the gentlemen spent their leisure hours in laughing at one another's infirmities. The merry gentleman cut up many amusing capers on the way in his fear of falling into an ambuscade. With his umbrella well in front, and his handkerchief to the sensitive organ, he walked in the exact centre of the corridor, cautiously approaching dark corners and rushing past them at full speed. When they had arrived at their destination these precautions were laid aside. He introduced the stranger to all present, with pompous diction, as "the craziest of the whole lot of you," which assertion he had previously assured McDonell would be infallibly disbelieved and make them all his friends and defenders. So it turned out; for each gentleman privately questioned him as to his

sanity, and he, returning the same answer which he had made to Trixy and the others, immediately went up in their estimation like a rocket.

“Mad!” said the gentleman who had the disagreeable office of carrying another man’s head on his shoulders—“mad, sir? The only feature of madness about him is that he has been seen walking with a man whose nose is made of sugar.”

“He has at least the satisfaction of knowing with whom he is walking,” returned the merry gentleman. “My nose is my own, if it is sugar. I warn you colonel not to attempt to borrow from him as you borrow from others. I have told him some of your dodges, and he knows that I would no more lend you one cent than I would lend you ten thousand dollars.”

“Does he know the reason why?” sneered the colonel—“that you haven’t either to lend.”

“He does,” with a withering smile; “and he knows, too, that the law allows no debts that have been contracted with a man who has lost his head.”

The attendants here interfered to prevent a quarrel.

“Crazy, both of ‘em,” whispered a venerable old man to McDonell, drawing him at the same time to a remote part of the room. “It does not become us to pay attention to their ravings. I understand that you have been a business man of some note in the world, and that you commanded considerable influence. I was once in a similar position. Now everything is in the past tense with me. Envious competitors and grasping relatives put me here. I turned my attention to literature. I have written a grammar, a most valuable work, and full of new theories respecting the language, etc.”

And he rambled on in a crazy way, attacking existing notions of grammar, defending his own, and end-

ing by proposing that McDonell should buy the right to print after allowing him a fair percentage on sales. As the old man got excited over this business matter, an attendant came at once to the rescue.

McDonell passed an amusing hour among them, and saw that the means of diversion at his command were neither few nor uninviting, and that, so far as his own mind was concerned, there was no danger of its giving way through horror of his associations. These were pleasant enough, and so much more pleasant than he had expected as to give him, from their novelty, positive pleasure. However, the confinement, the distressing thoughts from which he was never freed, foretold serious danger to his health if he could not counteract their effects. As the days proceeded he saw, indeed, that, despite the cheerful influences of the Stirlings, the ridiculous and mirth-provoking scenes among his associates, and the gentle resignation to God's will which he cultivated, he was surely failing. He had very little, in fact nothing, that he could afford to lose, and yet the first week had left its broad mark of wasting strength upon him. At the end of the second Dr. Stirling's face plainly showed his anxiety. A change of tactics was necessary. There was no time to be lost, for a month in that establishment meant death. He could not hold out long enough to gain a legal restoration to freedom, and he began to meditate some plan of immediate escape. It was a long time before he could think out anything methodical, and then it seemed impossible to execute without outside assistance. Sandy, the valet, who watched him like a fox, cunning enough never to be caught, might be bought with gold, but his own enemies could buy this man at a higher price. The keepers in that part of the building were unap-

proachable. With the gardeners and porters the inmates could not have any communication. His thoughts were tumultuous and feverish, and threatened to hasten the catastrophe he was anxious to avoid. As the days passed, and the impossibility of getting a helper still loomed up before him, a numb despair began to take hold on his faculties. Not even his strong confidence in God nor his earnest prayers for strength and patience, could shake off this sinking of overpowered nature.

He had been fifteen days in the asylum when he chanced to come one morning upon Juniper.

“Do I not know you?” he said, taking him by the arm.

“I owe my position here to you,” said Juniper in surprised yet grateful accents, “but I was not aware that you were here, sir.”

“Thank God that I have met you! I am here unjustly, and I must escape. You must help me. Come to this place again to-night. Your reward will be large enough to make up for the loss of your position. Will you come?”

“Willingly, sir, but not for money,” said grateful Juniper.

“We will talk of that another time.”

And he went away thanking heaven for this providential meeting. Sandy, with a puzzled face, stepped out from a place of concealment, and looked first after the keeper and then after his master doubtfully. He had heard nothing, and he was not sure whether it was more than an ordinary meeting.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REVERSES.

Time flies, and criminals with every moment grow more and more at ease with themselves and the world which has not known of their crime. Unless its effects are physical and continual, and like the ghost of Banquo, rise pale, and bloody even, at the feast, sin cannot well disturb the mental balance of the atheist and the brute man. The one has dulled all the finer sensibilities of nature. Nature's feebleness alone can bring to his mind with anything of pain a recollection of former misdeeds. The other has but to deal with himself. He knows of no judge to hurl a sentence from a tribunal, knows no court of jurisdiction superior to his own, has no idea of an injured superior to haunt his pleasures and his rest. The world cannot know his sin. To self only is he accountable, and never, when properly pampered in his education, can be found a more corrupt and partial personage. There may be present the vague fear of a sudden revealing of the secret, if there exists any evidence of the perpetrated crime. An accomplice may occasion uneasiness, and even alarm, at times. But these fears are shadowy at the most and purely accidental. There is hope of their removal and ultimate destruction. With the fallen Christian the case is different. Remorse is with him an undying flame fed from faith—faith in the existence of a God who will punish and reward, and whose judgments are sure, swift, and unavoidable. Not the depths of the sea, not the bowels of the earth, can hide him from the

avenger. The corruption of the grave is no protection, for even out of its rottenness shall his suffering consciousness be evolved, as a plant springs from such a soil to stand under the lightnings of heaven. He has indeed the refuge of the great atonement. But, sin having once entered, remorse sits down at the table, and the sinner thereafter mingles his bread with ashes and his drink with tears.

The relief which the atheist experiences had of course been allowed to Nano, and had brought her peace. Free from troubles of conscience, prospective mistress of a large estate, surrounded by friends and worshipping admirers, love dawning in her heart, she could often fancy herself as happy a woman as the world knew—as happy as she could reasonably expect to be with a ghastly skeleton in her closet.

Right at this period of happy composure there came a doubt and a first reverse—the only means of touching her conscience as to her sin. She had often said, There is no God. These words were always on her lips of late, so frequently uttered that, with her usual quickness, she began to fear there was hypocrisy in her own belief. She was too anxious to fortify it with the form of words. She many times made an effort to break herself of the habit. Like an irrepressible spring the words flew to her lips again and gushed out with blasphemous readiness. Doubt had entered her mind by stealth, and was there in the deep soil, a tiny, unnoticed plant, with roots struck deep and promising vigor in every part. Her security against remorse was thus broken in upon. Doubts are not easily shaken off, and hers was of vigorous growth. It was destined to grow until in its anguish her heart would speak out its native belief, and she would say even more readily than now she denied it, There is a God.

The first reverse came in the shape of a junior partner of the firm over which her father had once presided. He took advantage of the confusion of the time to steal over to the States with sixty thousand dollars of her property, and left a strong probability behind that, in spite of the work of detectives, he would never be discovered. This made a gap in her fortunes of most unpleasant dimensions, and caused her a meditation on the old superstition of a retribution. Perhaps there existed such a thing, and the laws of Nature, working with an intelligence of which man was still ignorant, might take it upon themselves to avenge any departure from their rigid discipline. The sensualist, the glutton, the overworked were Nature's avengers on themselves. Why not also the undutiful child and the robber? There was a law of compensation, and the ledger of the humblest person that breathed could show as even a balance as that of the richest and most powerful. Where was to be her compensation? Was this the first entry on the credit side of nature, the defalcation of one of her own servants? It was hard to say and unpleasant to think of, and she was very fierce with anything that disturbed her peace of mind. Her doubts made her angry, her reverses made her weak. She put away both with resolution, declaring they were vapors in her sky, and a few hours of sunshine would destroy them. Her doubt was an exhalation like those which always surround the sun of truth. Her money losses were incidents which time would undo and make good to her again. It must be recorded that after this stoical view of the situation she ate heartily and slept soundly for a short time.

Killany, as her business manager, and the other trustees received the sharpest of lectures from the lady

for their remissness. About this time she began to think of Olivia, and recalled the promise made to Sir Stanley in that young lady's regard. Strangely enough, she had forgotten it, and over a week had elapsed since Sir Stanley's visit. Since one fatal day Olivia had not set foot in McDonell House—a fact which at first had given its mistress great uneasiness until the baronet's explanation had been made. The two weeks that had fled were short enough, but she had lived years of thought in that period. It seemed to her as if she had never seen and known her friend at all, but had only dreamed of the sweet bit of virtuous beauty as she dreamed of ethereal possibilities of culture. In spite of an effort to cast aside the feeling, she believed that something had stolen in between Olivia and her to change the current of their affections. So keen did this impression become that she resolved no longer to put off a visit to her friend.

Her carriage drove up to Olivia's door some days after the bombshell prepared by Mr. Quip had descended on the quiet household, and several ladies of fashion, seeing her, were astonished as at an apparition. It was to be supposed that if any one knew the character of the Fullertons it was Miss McDonell, who thus outraged every principle of etiquette by calling so openly on the ostracised. They could not believe her deliberately guilty of such boldness. There were certain limits beyond which even a leader could not go, and no one was usually more circumspect than Miss McDonell. The incident, not being satisfactorily accounted for, left the ladies and society in a tumult of contradiction and excitement. Nano, unconscious of the stir this visit was creating, found her friend in a very different state of mind and body from that which Sir Stanley had described. She was pale

yet from the effects of her nervous suffering, but her eyes were sparkling, and her talk sparkled in unison, as became her cheery nature. She was gay under the strange yet great intelligence which Mr. Quip had brought her. The greetings between her and Nano were about as cordial as between good acquaintances. Hand-clasp and lip meet were not made, and it struck Nano disagreeably, though it was her own fault mostly, that for the first time Olivia omitted the offer of hand and cheek. This was the entering wedge of their estrangement. She still felt herself unworthy to touch in affection the pure, stainless girl, who was so utterly unconscious of wickedness like hers. In Olivia's presence, and with Olivia's distant manner like a scroll before her eyes, she knew that a gap had come between them which would not easily, and perhaps never, be closed. This consciousness was dimly shared by her friend, who chid her innocent soul for its instinctive revulsion from one who had so lately been, and still was, her dear and admired friend.

"It is so long since I saw you last," Nano said, "that I am astonished to see you so cheerful and bright. You have been so exclusive for over two weeks that I feared you were still suffering from those vaguely hinted sorrows which, by the way, you have never explained, as you promised."

"And I never will explain them now, dear Nano," answered she, with such a heartfelt sigh and such an expression of relief. "They have all fled and have left not a rack behind. But you—you are almost bright, too, for the time. You have got over your suffering very well."

"I suffered more in the time preceding my father's departure than since," the lady said, calmly fixing her

clear eyes on Olivia's questioning ones. "You know there never was much love lost between us. What little was aroused by his sickness vanished under the tortures I endured from him. Now I am free to a certain extent, though you may think my freedom has been sadly purchased."

"It was a bitter necessity. You are alone now. You have not a relative in the world."

"That does not disturb me. I have friends who will more than make up for me what I have lost."

"How can you speak so, Nano?"

"I could not speak truthfully otherwise. How is it with you and Sir Stanley, if I may be allowed to ask?"

A gentle blush overspread Olivia's face.

"It is not a fair question, Nano, but I do not deny your right to know. He is well and I am well. He has asked me to marry him, and I have said, Wait a little."

"When you should have said yes, plumply and honestly, if you had followed your own heart. And the surroundings were so favorable—moonlight and ice! Do not say that your emotions ran away with you in so cool a place."

"Rather say that I became more cautious, for I hesitated and laid down conditions."

"Well, when do you intend to give the favorable word?"

"Not just yet, you may feel certain. Perhaps—"

"I will hear no more suppositions. The answer must be an absolute 'yes' this time. You have still your secrets. I recommend open confession, which is good for the soul. For a tiny creature like you to carry mind burdens is a dangerous task. They will wear your body away. Confess, my child, confess."

"I do that regularly. I have no secrets from any one. My mind troubles are known to my confessor, and from him I get more consolation than any other could give."

"That terrible superstition—confession!" said Nano, raising her hands in affected horror. "How can you endure its humiliation! What has become of your self respect, Olivia, that you should submit to any one so absolute a power over you? I cannot understand the Catholic infatuation on this point."

"Did you not say just now that open confession was good for the soul?"

"I merely quoted a saying; and, besides, I never could mean confession as you understand it."

"I don't care to discuss the question. I have said so many hard things of your likes and dislikes—that is, *your* doctrines and *other people's* doctrines—that I am not going to offend any more. When you have committed in your life a dark, heavy sin which you would not dare to communicate to a dearest friend even, and when its weight is pressing upon the conscience to the destruction of assured peace of mind and health of body, you may appreciate then what it is to be a Catholic and to have the rest and secrecy of confession at your disposal. No doubt you will consider it a very beautiful superstition, and recommend it as such to your cultured friends."

Nano winced visibly at this innocent yet suggestive reply. It touched rudely on a very tender spot.

"In that case," she replied, "I would prefer to keep my secret to myself."

"And live in the constant fear that it may be discovered? A woman with a secret dread at her heart is but half a woman. There, I shall not be drawn into an argument. I shall discuss these questions no more.

They do you no good, and excite me too much.'

"You are like a vision when you are in earnest over a thing," said Nano, watching her flushed face with admiration.

"I have never seen you in earnest over anything," said Olivia shortly.

"I keep it for my thoughts, and out of my conversations," returned the lady, and a shadow so deep settled on her countenance that Olivia was startled.

"If you look like that, Nano, your earnestness must be overwhelming."

"I beg your pardon for an inadvertence. And I must go," she said, rising abruptly, "without fulfilling my promise to a friend who believed you to be in the last stages of depression, and was anxious that I should discover the cause."

"Well, thank Heaven! the depression is gone, and its cause with it. Your errand failed of its purpose for want of an object."

"I am very glad it is so, Olivia. So long as you are yourself I am content and happy."

She held out her hand with something of the old manner, and then, as if recollecting herself, drew it away again, and with a formal adieu left the room, leaving Olivia in a state of wonderment and pain at her inexplicable actions. Out in the carriage, away from the eyes of every one, her face grew white with sudden anguish, and she clutched the velvet cushions violently.

"Why do I envy her," she moaned, "if not for that purity of hers which I lack, which I never had, and never will have? My remorse is personified in her, and while she lives, oh! while her memory exists in me, so long shall I suffer the intolerable agonies which I thought were for ever gone. My God! shall

I ever know peace again? But no, no," she added with a shudder; "there can be, there is, no God."

Unhappy woman! Faith was knocking at her heart, and the sin she would not acknowledge held and barred the entrance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MERITED PUNISHMENT.

Dr. Fullerton was a grave, studious man, with no love for society, though cheerful enough in disposition, fond of his books, his home, and his profession, and cherishing only one dream outside of the ordinary aspirations of his life—to wed with Nano McDonell. He was skilled in men's and the world's ways as thoroughly as in their lore. Long years of conflict with the world and its handmaids, poverty and misery, had not been passed in vain. He had conquered, taking away with him a fine touch of cynicism in his nature, strong enough to sweeten, as healthful salt can sweeten, the tenderness, the piety, the cheerful, warm affections of his manly soul. As a student he did not pay much attention to the affairs of that particular social world to which he belonged. His books were of greater interest than its gossip. They were his world, stretching out like vast and limitless prairies, great tracts of wilderness yet to be trodden by the hardy traveller, intellectual Africas peopled with the most wonderful creations. Here he found his entertainment. He was ambitious. His desire was to sit with the famous of the land in the history of the nation. He was willing to work that he might reach the eminence, and he put aside all the allurements of youth, girded himself as the mountain-

climber girds, and gave himself to labor and to study in solid earnest.

Hence it was that the causes of Olivia's late mental disturbance were so difficult for him to discover. The cuts direct which he received from the people with whom he was acquainted were as numerous and severe as those which were showered on unfortunate Olivia ; but the scholar paid no attention to them, and went on his way serenely unconscious of the events which were transpiring. For this indifference Olivia was extremely thankful. She knew what she would have to face if Harry became acquainted with the matter, and if the current did not change this must soon happen. We know with what relief she welcomed the astonishing disclosures of Mr. Quip. She considered the danger in a great measure averted if Mr. Quip were able to do but a tithe of what he had promised ; and she therefore pressed upon her brother the urgency of closing at once with his offer, lest delay might prove hurtful to their interests.

Fate was hovering, however, over Killany's head. Dr. Fullerton was still inclined to be sceptical over Mr. Quip's revelations, and delayed the promised decision for more than a week. In the meantime Killany, delighted with the success of his villainous slanders, and encouraged, as cowards ever are, by the meekness, all misunderstood, of his victims, became bolder and openly laughed and sneered at what he elegantly termed the bar sinister on the Fullerton escutcheon.

No one had yet the hardihood to inform Sir Stanley of the position of his friends. Murmurs and whisperings died away at his ears. But it was impossible to conceal it for ever, and when the matter was at its culminating point some miserable little puppy popped

it at the baronet, and was choked, and strangled, and shaken out of his five senses for his officiousness—before a number of ladies, too, so excited did the Irishman become. For a few minutes there was a scene of fainting, screaming, cologne-water perfumes, and noisy demonstrations from the gentlemen present, which brought the baronet to his senses and drew forth an apology sufficient to atone for a severer misdeed. He wished to take his frightened victim aside and question him; but the ladies, dear creatures! took it on themselves to give him all particulars, which showed conclusively that the scandal had spread in all directions, and was as common among the interested as the latest song or the latest novel.

He hastened, therefore, to make Harry acquainted with the astonishing fact. The doctor was standing at the door of his office, looking wonderingly down the street. He had just come in from a round of professional calls, and had met that Hughes who on a former occasion had shown him some rudeness which was as yet unexplained. Harry had forgotten it under the pressure of his many duties, until it was recalled to his mind by a second meeting with the gentleman. Having addressed him courteously as he was passing the office, Hughes received the salute in a rather constrained and frightened fashion, stared, seemed surprised, yet afraid to express his surprise, and finally turned away, leaving the doctor as before to wonder what it meant. When the baronet came along he mentioned the matter.

“Come in,” said the latter—“come in to the office, and I will explain it.”

Then it was that the doctor noticed a high color in Sir Stanley’s cheek, a sparkle in his eye that was not usually there, and a general excitement of manner

which the man of fashion rarely permitted to take hold of him. Once in the inner sanctum the story was soon told, while Mr. Quip kept his ear to the keyhole and made faces at the carpet in his astonishment. The doctor listened quietly with lips that paled at first, and afterwards became swollen and red with compression.

“That explains many things,” he said, “which for so long a time have mystified us. Olivia’s illness, whose cause we could not discover, her seclusion, and the falling-off of her friends were no doubt owing to this slander. Poor little mistaken woman! How she suffered, and would suffer to the end! Probably she knows the slanderer!”

“What do you propose doing?” said the baronet.

“Wait here until I return,” answered the doctor. “I shall have news for you then.”

Sir Stanley laid his hand on his arm.

“I know you will punish the traducer,” he said, “and I wish you to remember that I claim a hand in it. I am wronged as deeply as yourself, since this slander touches the honor of my wife to be.”

“I shall remember,” said the doctor, and went away, taking his riding-whip with him. His appearance was composed and grave as usual, and excited no attention on the part of the people in the streets. He was looking for Hughes. He went first to his residence, but, finding him absent, sought him at his office. He was not there, and he would have waited for his return but that his feverish impatience would not permit him to rest. Going out on the street again, he saw the man he wanted in the office of a hotel, talking with friends and acquaintances of the doctor’s own. He could not have desired a better opportunity. Stepping up to the group, whom he

greeted with a familiar nod, and was not astonished to see it coldly returned, he touched Hughes on the arm.

“If you please, I would like from you, sir, an explanation of the manner in which you have lately thought fit to return the salutations which one gentleman is supposed to give another of his acquaintance. Not that I prize particularly your good-will, but I fancy there is a deeper meaning in your actions than the matter itself signifies.”

“You may take what meaning you like from it,” returned Hughes with stiff composure, and the others laughed softly. “I am not bound to account to any man for my behavior towards him so long as he is treated according to his position.”

“Very justly answered,” replied the doctor, “and for that very reason, that I am unjustly treated not only by you but by many others, do I demand an explanation. I shall have it from each of these gentlemen in turn. I begin with you, because I recall that you were the first to adopt towards me that demeanor which has since become the fashion. Now, sir, do you look upon me as not your equal, and why?”

“I do,” said the other, not so confidently, but firmly still, “and the wherefore is that I have been taught to look upon those born out of wedlock as not fit associates.”

The coterie seemed very much to expect that the doctor would vanish under this crushing reply, and were surprised to see him standing there determined and unmoved.

“Of course you have the best authority for the assertion you make,” he said. “It is a dangerous one to make of any man, and brings often the most serious consequences. I should like to hear the name of the person who gave you this bit of information.”

"What I know," was the cold reply, "I know upon good authority. Let that suffice. It ought to suffice for you. I will be catechised no further."

"You will answer one more question, sir. You will tell me the name of him who gave you the office of scandal-monger to the city, to spread his slander to the world. I here pronounce it a lie, and him who dares to utter it on no better authority than hearsay a liar. If you refuse to do as I bid, then you take his responsibility upon your own shoulders. You shall suffer now what is only meant for him."

He swung the whip along the mosaic pavement of the office, tilting its swaying top against the colored blocks with nice calculation, while he awaited the gentleman's answer. Hughes stood looking at him irresolutely. If his manner had been fiercer he would not have hesitated as to his action; but the doctor was grave, restrained, cool even to an appearance of weakness, yet decided and earnest, and warm enough in his words.

"I ask you again," said Harry more mildly, "to tell me the name of the person. I do not ask it under threat, but by a right which is mine in law and justice. In law you must do this or make good your own statement. In any case your silence will bring upon you the penalty of that other's dishonoring accusations."

"My informant was Dr Killany," said Hughes.

"Thank you. You have made the task which I have set myself quite easy, and set an example to these gentlemen which I am sure will be followed."

It *was* followed. All volunteered their information. He found that the majority had received the slander at second-hand, and at a considerably later date than Hughes. From the hotel he went direct to his own

home to obtain from Olivia her knowledge of the affair. He found with her the general, who was listening delightedly to Olivia's assurances of her own ability to disprove Killany's slanders. Both ladies instinctively jumped at the appearance of the doctor. He was stern and muddy ; and he stalked into the parlor with blazing eyes and yellow hair curling viciously close to his head. The general would have departed immediately, but the doctor compelled her to reseat herself and listen to his words.

" You are probably aware of the matter," he said shortly, " and it is because of the foolishness of some of you that the good name of my sister and myself has been bandied about with jest and scorn in every corner of society. Olivia, who is the man that first ventured to start this report concerning us ? You know him, and I must know him too."

Olivia hesitated, with pallid cheeks and tear-streaming eyes.

" What would you do, Harry ?" she said, terrified.

" What might not have been done," he answered sternly, " if you had not so foolishly concealed it all from me this month past. Come, tell me at once."

" But remember, Harry," she pleaded, " what Mr. Quip has told us, and how soon we may be able to disprove this slander peacefully. I pray you let there be no violence."

" Violence !" he laughed. " No, there shall be no violence. Will you tell me girl, and undo in part the bitter mischief that has already been occasioned by your silence ?"

" Mischief not so serious," broke in the general vigorously, " but that it can be speedily undone. I make myself responsible for restoring to you your old position. Olivia is right : there should be no violence."

"You will not tell me, I see," he exclaimed moodily, and paying no more attention to tears and sobs than to a rain-storm, in which he never hoisted an umbrella. "You are a pair of conspirators, and in your mistaken desire to avoid the unavoidable you only heap the mischief higher. Killany so far is responsible."

The cunning fellow! Both women could not help looking at each other, and both started.

"Killany *is* the man," said the doctor, smiling. "Ah! well, it was not improbable."

And he was stalking out of the room when the two rushed at him and flung their arms about him, and declared in a chorus that he would never, never leave that room until he had promised to leave the matter in their hands, or at least to do Killany no physical harm. At which he laughed and showed them his whip.

"I shall do no more harm than beat him," he said.

"And if he has the spirit of a man he will shoot you," cried the general, while Olivia shrieked out "Blood!" in a hysterical way, and, when he shook her off, fell into the general's arms fainting. Very cruelly he left her there and went on his errand of justice.

Mrs. Strachan, after reviving and consoling Olivia as well as was possible under the circumstances, fled to McDonell House with the intention of making the mistress acquainted with the little drama about to be enacted. Killany was coming out of the door and greeted her with his sugary smile. He owed her one for her astonishing patronage of Olivia. The general stood looking at him a moment doubtfully. "No, I will not," she said at last, turning away. "It will be no more than a whipping, and the coward richly deserves it."

The friendly hand that might have saved Killany from disgrace was withheld, and he went on his way to meet his shame, while Mrs. Strachan detailed to the horror-stricken Nano the sufferings of his victims.

In the meantime the baronet was awaiting with exemplary patience the doctor's return. Killany arrived before him, and was engaged in conversation with Sir Stanley when the avenger entered.

"Well?" said the baronet eagerly.

"There stands the man," cried the doctor, for the first time trembling with passion, as he pointed his finger towards the astonished Killany. "See his face whiten, the coward! who would dare to blacken the name of an honest man by his vile slanders."

Sir Stanley hid his surprise in his anger and contempt.

"What is the meaning of this, gentlemen?" said the doctor, comprehending at least the menace of the whip.

"You shall hear, and feel too," said Fullerton, controlling himself by a great effort. "Are not you the man who says that my sister and I have no right to the name we bear?"

"I am," said the physician boldly. "I do not think you can prove your right to it."

"I shall prove it on you," answered the doctor grimly. "You have deliberately injured me, and without any motive. You do not deserve the treatment of a gentleman. Take this, and this, my friend." He raised the whip to bring it down across the pale, bold, even smiling countenance; but quick as thought Killany had drawn a pistol and levelled it at his head.

"No violence, if you please, gentlemen," he said coolly. "I have rather the best card in the game."

The whip never stopped in its descent, but swerved

enough to strike the weapon from his hand to the floor. It went off just as the whip, raised a second time, fell once, twice, thrice with terrific swiftness and force on the pale, derisive, but desperate face. The doctor fell to the ground backwards, his hands clasped over his disfigured countenance, half-unconscious, and unable to defend himself. Still the pitiless blows rained on him, cutting and merciless, on hands, and shoulders, and body, leaving red or bloody stripes where they touched the white, delicate skin. The report of the pistol brought Quip from the outer office, and with him two other gentlemen. They would have interfered, but the baronet politely declined to permit it until the avenger had been thoroughly satisfied.

"When your master recovers," he whispered to Quip, who was rejoicing inwardly, "you may hint that if he be found in the city within the month I shall have the honor of administering a similar chastisement."

Dr. Fullerton and the baronet then withdrew.

As for Killany, he lay there unconscious, and recovered only to rush into a blasphemous denunciation of his enemies and himself. His disgrace would now become as public as the slander had been. His days of good fortune were over, and he must go forth, as he had so often done before, a branded outcast from society.

CHAPTER XXV.

REVELATIONS.

At the conclusion of the office scene the avengers thoughtfully took their way homeward.

Dr. Fullerton had rather the more clouded thoughts. Sir Stanley did not doubt for a moment for his friend's ability to prove the slander malicious and untrue. He swung along over the pavement

with airiness of manner and triumph beaming from his eyes, chuckling inwardly at Killany's bitter discomfiture, raging to think that the man had caused his little Olivia so much suffering, and determined to have a private understanding with him. The doctor, on the contrary, was in the hottest kind of a dilemma. He had disgracefully punished a man for fixing on him the stigma of illegitimacy, and yet he was not in a condition to prove his legitimacy to the world. The recollection of the late conversation with Olivia opened his eyes to a very wide extent indeed with regard to the nature of the ground on which he now stood. The difficulties which he had then propounded to her and to himself stood out with more prominence and ugliness than the humorous consolations and trifling objections which he had given her. Sir Stanley must first know of the condition in which he found himself. This pained him more than any other fact. The baronet's confidence was as plain as the day in his manner, and he had now so far committed himself that it looked much like having set a trap for him to have drawn him into the affair at all.

In due time they reached the quiet house in its drowsy street, and withdrew into the drawing-room. Olivia was not to be seen, and the baronet was for calling her at once into their presence. Harry objected. Olivia felt herself in disgrace, and so he wished her to remain until a clear idea of the foolishness and wrongfulness of her conduct had been impressed on her mind.

"I cannot see the necessity of that," said the baronet decidedly. "She behaved like a real heroine, suffering untold anguish for your sake and mine, and determined to hold that secret so long as it threatened danger to you and me. If her policy was a mistaken

one her motives were high and correct, and you must remember that Mrs. Strachan was her adviser. I think that, having borne most of the pain, she should have a trifling share in the glory."

"I cannot find fault with your reasoning, Sir Stanley," said the moody doctor, "but we have not the glory yet."

The baronet laughed so loudly that of course Olivia heard him, as he intended she should.

"Now we shall hear some lofty sentiments on the hollowness of the victory you have won—a pious method, I notice, of exalting the worth of the thing and sweeping in one hundred per cent. of the capital invested. Well, have it as you will; I must see Olivia here."

The doctor tapped the table with his fingers and remained with his eyes moodily fixed on the gate. His silence was ominous.

"Why, man," cried Sir Stanley after a long, impatient pause, "you are going to sleep. One would think you had just committed a murder instead of having lashed a desperado intent on filling you with lead from toe to forehead."

"I am thinking," replied the doctor, "of the chances of proving this Killany the liar that he is. I find that the immediate prospect is not the best in the world; in fact, I may say frankly it could not be much worse."

Sir Stanley sat bolt upright in his chair, while the hues of astonishment shot over his tell-tale face with an effect very trying to the nerves of the sensitive doctor. Then he subsided as suddenly, on second thought, into well bred restraint and concealment of his surprise and curiosity.

"You are disturbed," continued Harry, "and I do

not blame you. You know the story of our lives. I have not kept back a single incident from you. It is a troublesome fact that I have no written evidence by which to prove all that I say and surmise about myself. Neither have I the *viva-voce* evidence of witnesses, although I am confident that both exist. As evidence of some kind should be forthcoming immediately, you can understand the delicacy of my situation."

"A pretty bad box, I must say," answered the baronet dubiously, and much distressed. "I suppose that the work of hunting up your antecedents would be gigantic labor for the time we have."

"It would be simply impossible," answered Harry, relieved and pleased to see that the doubtful look of the matter did not affect Sir Stanley's faith and love.

"And haven't you the slightest excuse to force down the throats of the mob and still their shouting until better could be obtained? A mere thread now would tie their tongues, at the least."

The doctor hesitated. He thought of Quip's startling propositions, but they had come to wear so miserable an appearance after a few days of meditation that he scarcely dared mention them.

"There is something, I know," Sir Stanley broke in. "Now out with it, for I can see that you are doubtful as to its value. We can't overlook anything in this affair, you know."

"Well, there is a thread," assented the reluctant doctor, "as fine and perceptible as a spider's, and about as useful. I scarcely care to mention it. You have seen that fellow Quip in Killany's office, have you not?"

"I whispered something in his ear that will delay his master's recovery. Yes, I know him."

"He called on us not long ago and made a rather astonishing proposition. He offered to inform us of our antecedents generally, of the whereabouts of the man who until a few years ago played the rôle of our guardian, and assured us that this guardian had appropriated a large sum of money belonging to us. He agreed to produce the necessary evidence to obtain our money and our name, if we gave him, out of the few hundred thousands which he declared are ours, the sum of five thousand. As an earnest he left a paper, the marriage certificate of our parents—"

"Marriage certificate!" cried Sir Stanley, brightening. "Why, Harry, you unconscionable—"

"There, there," said the doctor, "you expect wonders from this certificate, as I did at first; but for present purposes it is practically useless. It certifies to the marriage of William Hamilton, of Glasgow, Scotland, and Olivia Carncross, of Babington, England, by the Rev. Manuel Da Costa, in the city of Rio Janeiro, at a date corresponding properly to our ages. How useful the document is in the case before us is clear. I do not like to expect much more from so wretched a chap as this Quip."

"He is a rogue, and a cunning one," said Sir Stanley confidently, "and I have no doubt he is as well acquainted with the contents of Killany's private papers as Killany himself. Now, it is evident, from the assurance with which the fascinating doctor circulated this falsehood, that he knew or thought he knew something concerning your past. He may have inquired at the college and at the convent, and received pretty conclusive answers for his way of thinking. Do you remember how smilingly he asserted your inability to disprove his lies? Perhaps he is more closely connected with you and yours than you

imagine. Quip has become aware of something and wishes to put his knowledge out at interest. I think it worth while receiving his advances and seeing what he can do. It would be criminal to neglect any opportunity in so important an affair."

"I agree with you. But I warn you that we have little to expect from him."

"Wait and see. Send for him at once. Have him here to-night and let us examine his credentials. If he furnishes you with a few hundred thousand dollars in cash he will have more than earned his five thousand, filthy beggar as he is. It would be worth that if he gave you a solid right to your new name. Hamilton—Carncross. Henry Carncross Hamilton! For a thoroughly rich, aristocratic tone that goes infinitely beyond Dashington. Well, be off about your business. I am going to find and console Olivia. You are cruel towards her for an imprudence which is as much a part of the sweet creature's make-up as her eyes. I could not have the heart to take from her one or the other."

"Bear her my assurances of forgiveness, Sir Stanley ; I—"

"Won't you give me them yourself, Harry dear?" said a tremulous voice from the door, and, turning, they beheld her standing there, her eyes dimmed with tears and her pretty lips quivering. Her face and form clearly indicated the force of her late mental suffering, so thin had she become. She looked like a penitent who was atoning for some great and dreadful sin, instead of a cheery young heart whose only transgression had been her innocence and inexperience. Sir Stanley was put in an apoplectic rage by the melting sight, and said some hard things of Killany. As for the doctor, he was all grief and contrition in a

moment, took her in his arms while the baronet chafed in the distance, and said a hundred brotherly and assuring things to soothe the little heart. It was a brief but violent storm, and, according to the nature of such storms, left the air brighter and purer than before. Leaving her to the care of the baronet, the doctor hastened on his important errand.

That evening found Mr. Quip seated in the drawing-room of the Fullertons, with a bundle of documents before him as portentous and, in the eyes of the doctor, as harmless as a young barrister's bag, and in his company a weazened, dried-up, wretched old fellow who he introduced as "Mr. Waring, clerk in the wholesale house of McDonell & Co., and a man of some usefulness in the important revelations about to be made." Mr. Waring was very old and decrepit, and seemed mightily afraid of Mr. Quip, sensible and shrewd as he evidently was. So afraid was he that he kept his eyes fastened on him as a dog would on his master, and forgot all the courtesies of social life, except as Mr. Quip reminded him of them. Thus he bowed to the lady and gentlemen with his eyes turned on the bird-like Quip, sat down in the same manner, and continued to stare at the hatchet-face with a persistency that made Olivia shiver. Only one thing could divert his attention—when Quip turned his hard eyes on him. The volatile medical student was modestly at home. His manner was insolently cool, but of that particular shade of coolness Mr. Quip was unable to divest himself, and was, in fact, quite innocent of its presence. He moved about with the cautiousness and facial expression of an old crane wading through an unfrequented swamp, his eye cocked now in one direction, now in another, and his narrow head following every motion of the eyes. He

accepted his seat gingerly, as he always did. The arm or back of a chair, as requiring a greater effort at balancing, was more acceptable than a silken cushion.

When he and Mr. Waring had been satisfactorily disposed of, the doctor said that he had already explained to Mr. Quip the necessity of his presence that evening, and therefore the gentleman might begin without delay the revelations which he professed it to be in his power to make. Mr. Quip opened out his formidable bundle as a preparatory movement, cleared his throat, looked so hard at Mr. Waring as to provoke the old man into a gentle remonstrance, and then began the following account of his own and other people's villanies :

"I must beg your pardon, madam and gentlemen, if I am compelled to be somewhat prolix in my narrative, and still again that I must shock you by my frankness. It is necessary to be frank. You understand that my tale is concerning a set of rascals, among which I must unfortunately class myself and my respected friend Mr. Waring ; and, as a consequence, the deeds which I now give to the light are as odorous as a batch of political intrigues. What I have learned has been learned within the past six weeks. Before that time I had only vague suspicions as to how matters stood with certain parties residing in this city. These suspicions had been roused by casual remarks of Dr. Killany's uttered in the privacy of his inner office, and from certain papers which the doctor was so incautious as to leave in his secretary. These papers I copied, appropriated the originals, and left the copies in their stead. They were letters from a gentleman of the city who, finding himself in Killany's power to a limited extent, was willing to purchase his good-will by using his influence in the doc-

tor's behalf. That the doctor profited by this is evident from the suddenly-acquired but permanent rank of a fashionable physician. The first move in the right direction I made when the doctor some time ago called me into his office and made the proposition that I should find for him a person possessing some peculiar qualifications. The person might be of any age or condition, male or female, and should be able truthfully to swear to the death of any two children, these children to have been a boy, and his sister some years younger. It was a strange case and interested me at once. I had a friend, a wild, good-natured medical student, at present a keeper in the insane asylum, by the name of Juniper—”

“Juniper!” said the doctor in amazement.

“And this friend had a romantic story which he had heard from his mother concerning two children whose parents had died in New York after enduring a sea-voyage from Brazil. They had left some property to the children, and both the children and the property had been taken in charge by a friend whose name Juniper had not learned. The boy was sent to an American college, the girl disappeared. But it was Juniper's idea of the pathetic to have these children die in his version of the romance. He told the story regularly. He described his visits to the boy Hamilton, the death of the girl in some out-of-the-way place, the boy's grief and subsequent decline, varnishing the whole with many pretty inventions of his own, all tending to excite the deepest emotions of sympathy in the human breast. On Mr. Juniper I settled as the very individual whom Dr. Killany required, and at a favorable moment I drew him into a recital of the story with the intention of offering him one or two hundred dollars to swear as Killany wished. You

may imagine my surprise when, in a fit of pique, he declared that the children were yet alive and would one day make a vigorous fight for their own. I took care to inform Juniper of the loss he had sustained in his first attempt at telling the truth. It confirmed him, I suppose, in the habits of lying, and it did something worse for him: it made him willing to perjure himself in order to win his paltry dollars. Being pinched for the right man, and having a game of my own to play with which this accorded well, I accepted his offer, and the thing was done precisely as we had agreed.

"It was necessary for Killany not only to have a witness of this kind, but also to prepare a series of forged letters, newspaper-slips, and the like, in order to carry out *his* schemes. I was directed to supply them, and I was requested to proceed to New York, make what inquiries I could concerning two children of the name of Hamilton whose father and mother had died in New York some twenty years ago after journeying from Brazil. Marvellous coincidences! Juniper's children of the romance were stranded in the same city, under the same name and similar circumstances. This seemed to be the extent of Killany's information regarding the Hamiltons, except that he knew also of their living for a long time in some college and convent. Mine, to be sure, was a wild-goose chase, had I not already heard Juniper's story. That made the road clear. I obtained from Juniper his mother's address, found the old lady, and received from her a written declaration of facts concerning the Hamiltons. Here it is, and Mrs. Juniper stands ready to swear to the truth of the same at any time."

The paper was read, and afforded to Olivia and the doctor the first definite glimpse into their mysterious

past. The reader is already aware of much that occurred in that time, and, instead of wearying with details, we shall let Mr. Quip resume his narrative.

“ My object is now to prove your identity with the young Hamiltons. The guardian who had taken the orphans in charge was not very careful in concealing the traces of his crime. Mrs. Juniper had managed to learn that the boy had been sent to a Catholic college in the interior of New York State ; and as there was but one, I went direct to the institution and found what I sought. At a time corresponding to the date of Hamilton’s departure from New York a boy named Fullerton had been brought to the college and remained there until manhood, supported by a gentleman who never appeared at the college and never made any inquiries about his ward. The boy had been brought in charge of a man who had given no name and no address, but whose description I got, and found that, by allowing for the difference of twenty years or so, Mr Waring was the man.”

Mr Waring nodded with great energy, but said nothing.

“ And this facetious old rascal,” continued Mr. Quip, slapping him heartily on the shoulder, “ is the connecting link in the chain of evidence. He was his master’s right-hand man, and he can swear that the boy whom he placed in St. Ignatius College, and the girl whom he sent to the Ursulines at Quebec, under the names of Henry and Olivia Fullerton, were the Hamilton children. He can swear to much more, if necessary ; only I have not thought it necessary.”

“ Oh ! no, not necessary,” muttered Waring appealingly. “ Never that.”

“ Don’t fret, old man. I’ll stick to my word as long as you stick to yours.”

"I'll stick," said Waring briefly.

"You can easily perceive, madam, and gentlemen, the importance of what I have related. There exists no difficulty of proving that you are the children of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. That is assured. For the rest let me continue to develop the facts. I prepared for Killany the letters and newspaper-slips which went to prove the death of the Hamilton children. They were flimsy things and never would have stood in a court of law; but they answered his purpose, which was to prove to the heirs of your guardian the fact of your deaths. They were scrupulous about keeping money that belonged to other people, but, the owners failing to appear, they thought to hold it justly. In the meantime I was naturally anxious to ascertain what property Mr. Hamilton had taken with him from Brazil. Here is a little correspondence on the subject with a Brazilian lawyer. For a trifling expense he discovered that Mr. Hamilton had left Brazil with thirty thousand pounds in his possession, represented by a bill of exchange on a prominent banking-house in New York. The ledgers of this bank I examined. I found that the sum had been placed to the gentleman's account, and had been drawn out shortly before his death. It is clear what became of it.

"The man who was your guardian, your father's friend, whom he trusted so thoroughly, is a highly respectable and unfortunate gentleman of this city—Mr. McDonell. He has been having his troubles lately, as you know, and has wound up in the lunatic asylum. I promised you at my first visit to show you the means of getting back your property. The circumstantial evidence is already strong enough to force from McDonell his stolen goods, if he were not beyond any such arrangement; or from his daughter,

but that her control of the property does not begin until her father dies, and the law has its vigilant eye on the trustees. Without its knowledge and consent there is no getting at the funds. Nothing that McDonell himself could do would be available so long as he remained in the asylum. If you wish to proceed in this matter quietly, so as not to attract attention to the McDonells, it will be necessary to have the report of the lunacy commission overthrown and McDonell pronounced a sane man."

"That is impossible," said the doctor in a low tone. "He was mad as a man could be."

"He was not mad," said Quip so suddenly that a dread of some terrible truth to be revealed seized upon the whole party. "He was not mad, and here is my proof: I have learned—no matter how—that after his late severe illness he wished to make restitution to the orphans he had wronged, or to the poor."

"Ay, so he did, so he did," muttered Waring.

"Killany, who was dreaming of a marriage with Miss McDonell, and wished to marry all the property as well, got wind of it and determined to prevent it. Chance favored him in McDonell's sudden illness. The old gentleman became weak-minded. Killany starts a rumor around the city that he is mad, and works so well on Miss McDonell that he got her to consent to the thing by proving that the real heirs were dead, and by showing up the madness of giving money to strangers who had no more right to it than she. Between them they sent him to the asylum."

"You are mad!" gasped the doctor, completely taken aback at this declaration. "You know not what you are saying of a most estimable lady. I was one of the commission myself. I could swear to his insanity."

"That may be," Mr. Quip coolly replied. "I heard the father and daughter conversing on that night of the carnival. I was back a full hour before you. I went only to spy on you and Miss McDonell, because Killany feared you were both for making a match of it. I was at the house when she returned. The old man had discovered that they were making him insane, and had raised an awful row in the hall. It was just over when she came in, and he dragged her roughly into the library. They went at it hot and heavy.

"The world says you are mad, and your writings after this aren't worth sixpence," says she.

"Do you believe that I am mad?" says he.

"Not if you give up this idea of squandering your money on the poor," says she. "If you don't you go to the asylum."

"That was the sum of it. Every time they met they talked like that. It went against her feelings terribly, but Killany kept her up to the mark. Any one with half an eye could see that there was something wrong in that house and in the way things were going generally. It cannot be long before McDonell is out, if he does not die in the meantime. It may interest you to know that Miss McDonell refused Killany's offer of marriage lately, and he was awfully cut up about it. The castigation which he received to-day was a clincher. He will soon lay hands on all the spare cash and leave the country. You must now take steps for removing McDonell from the asylum. He is willing and anxious to set matters right in a quiet way, and his daughter, when she sees that the game is up, will be glad to get off easily. You can go to law, if you wish. There is testimony of sufficient strength to win your suit."

Mr. Quip placed his bag of papers on the table and waited for the acceptance of his offer. The little circle which he had entertained was silent, and the prevailing expression of countenance among them was a great disappointment to Mr. Quip. A positive agony was traced on the doctor's handsome face. He was pale, nervous and frowning; Sir Stanley looked surprised, grieved and helpless; and Olivia sat with the tears dropping slowly from her eyes. She had made no friendly protest against the accusation against Nano. For her the latter part of Mr. Quip's story was simple truth. It only confirmed her suspicions, and her downcast and conscious looks did more to confirm the words of the eaves-dropping student than anything else could have done. Altogether they showed no appearance of having just leaped at a single bound from poverty into wealth, from obscurity and shame into prominence and honor. Mr. Quip was annoyed, and wondered what next move these strange people would make.

"Your story is not to be doubted, Mr. Quip," said Harry, the first to break the silence, "and it is well backed up by documents and witnesses. We shall have occasion to use both, and you may consider your offer finally accepted."

"Thank you," said Quip, rising. "I am at your service at any moment, and so is Waring. Aren't you, Waring, my old boy?"

Mr. Waring, being knocked into his senses by a sharp slapping on the back, muttered:

"Always, always, Mr. Quip; but not for one thing, remember."

"I remember. Bid the lady and gentlemen good-evening, and we may go."

Mr. Waring, profoundly saluting the party, with

his eyes fixed on Mr. Quip, said good-evening obediently, and they went away, the encouraging shouts and slappings of Mr. Quip being heard echoing for some time after in the quiet streets.

There was a long, painful silence in the little room.

“What do you think of it?” said Harry.

“That your case is proved,” the baronet answered. He did not venture to say more.

“And the other—what of the other?”

Olivia’s uncontrollable sobs were the only answer, and they were significant.

Another silence, while the doctor stood looking gloomily into the fire.

“Ah! well,” he sighed, “that dream is over. God’s will be done.”

“And what move will you make in regard to your property?” said the baronet.

“I shall leave the matter in the hands of Bishop Leonard. He will be our commissioner.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MEMORABLE NIGHT—ITS FIRST PART.

Sandy, the valet, was uneasy after the accidental meeting of McDonell and Juniper. Not having been able to approach near enough to hear their brief conversation, he was all the more disturbed. In the act itself there was not much to excite suspicion, for McDonell spoke many times a day to various persons in the institution; but nevertheless a large batch of doubts took firm root and flourished in the valet’s brain. It was his duty to be suspicious. He was paid for it, and with the death or escape or recovery of McDonell his salary ceased. He was not talented enough or principled enough to win so easily as here a

living in the generous but discerning world. His opportunities for watching his master were limited. He was forbidden the room, except at stated times, and dared not be seen spying upon him under penalty of expulsion from the asylum. Night and the darkness of corner staircases were his vantage-points, but they were scanty in space, and in convenience not at all proportioned to the work to be done.

He was uneasy over the late incident, because his quick eye had detected emotions in both Juniper and McDonell which had never been present on similar occasions. The former walked away surprised, thoughtful, and serious, as if meditating something of importance; the latter was nervous and excited, and hastened down the corridor with a feverish energy of gait which he had not shown for days. These unusual signs of emotion were enough for the keen-eyed valet. He kept guard that day with reckless indifference to consequences. McDonell, however, was drooping and sad as usual. He made his ordinary visits and took his ordinary exercise, dining with the Stirlings, where Sandy heard him and Trixy laughing in a cheerful, natural way. He was always cheerful in Trixy's presence. In the evening he returned to the solitude of his own room, and the valet saw no more of him, although he watched until the lateness of the hour rendered it impossible to suppose that any keeper or patient would dare venture forth on an unlawful errand. The merry gentleman with the sugary nose, whose name was Andrews, had called on McDonell and gone away again, as he had been in the habit of doing for some weeks. If Sandy noted the circumstance he gave it only the attention which an everyday occurrence deserved; yet herein was the suspicious gentleman wickedly deceived. His policy of

suspecting everything and everybody was too unnatural to be successful, and in this case it failed him. Within his master's room, between the time of Andrew's entrance and exit, an episode had taken place which the valet would have given his ears to have known.

"You are ready for the message which I am to entrust to you?" McDonell said, as the merry gentleman entered with his handkerchief to his nose and his umbrella spread for emergencies.

"Ready, sir," answered Andrews heartily, "and ready to carry it through a rain-storm, though it should melt off my head as well as my nose."

A declaration which drew tears of gratitude from the poor merchant, who, having become accustomed to his friend's ways, and being of late very weak and unsettled, wept when ordinarily he would have laughed.

"Moisture, moisture," said Andrews, playfully putting his handkerchief to the other's eyes. "You are dampening the atmosphere. My nose will not stand it an instant longer."

McDonell dried his tears, and the merry gentleman, having applied the moistened handkerchief to his own nose, gave such a yell of terror as is seldom heard outside of an insane asylum.

"Devilish forgetful on my part," he muttered, on ascertaining that his nose had not suffered. "Emotion is not my *forte*. I have been told often enough to be calm on all occasions, and you see how I obey the injunction. Every excitement of this kind sends the blood bounding through my veins like a race-horse, and of course the sugary formation at the base of my nose is more rapid. If I go on in this way my head will soon be affected. Think of a sugar

head on me ! O Lord ! what a fate. I could shed tears as readily as yourself but for the danger of an overflow on my nose."

"Here is the message," said McDonell, anxious to have a delicate matter despatched as quickly as possible. "Excuse me for dismissing you at once, for my man may be waiting, and it would not do to miss him." Having recovered his equanimity and his handkerchief, Mr. Andrews apologized for his long-windedness and hastened on his errand ; and in this way was the valet deceived and his suspicions lulled to reasonable repose for the next few days.

McDonell had chosen the night of the 17th on which to make his escape, and this he communicated to Juniper with his general instructions. It had been rumored in the asylum, and it had become a certainty in the city, that the Irish parade of that day might be a source of serious danger to the lives and property of the citizens. The Williamite mob had sworn vengeance on the "croppy" who should deck himself that day in the green, and a mob never discriminates. The authorities found it necessary to summon their forces and to warn the citizens of the impending danger. The confusion prevailing in the city would not, of course, penetrate to the asylum ; but as the officers would have their attention mainly directed against outside attack, the chances of escape were fairer than they might ever be again. He had not described his plans to any one save Juniper. Andrews was as much acquainted with the venture as was necessary for the part which he had been selected to play, and that this was not of small importance will appear in the sequel.

Since the meeting with Juniper the valet had made

it a duty every night to mount guard over his master's door from a convenient hiding-place. It had not as yet been productive of anything, and had caused himself much suffering from the cramped positions he was compelled to maintain for hours; but, with the pertinacity and hopefulness of his kind, he continued at his post. On the fatal night he was quietly engaged in his self-imposed duty when Mr. Andrews came along to pay his usual visit to McDonell. Seeing the dark, cropped head of the valet stretched cautiously from its hiding-place, he gave it a sounding and vigorous whack with his umbrella.

"There, my spying friend," said he, "though you're not a croppy, you got as honest a crack that time as any Irishman will receive to night. What's more, you haven't the spunk to return it, as the Irishman would, which is one reason, perhaps, for my readiness in seizing so desirable an opportunity. You were spying, and don't attempt to deny it. The doctor shall hear of this. Things are coming to a pretty pass in this institution if the dwellers are to be persecuted within as well as without. Be off to your own quarters at once, and rest assured that you will never sleep another night in the asylum."

Sandy slunk away meekly, but returned a moment later when the sugary nose, which he swore to sponge and tweak at the first opportunity, was safely housed in McDonell's room. Mr. Andrews remained with his friend somewhat longer than usual that evening. The asylum was, through its officials, in a state of subdued excitement. The fighting had begun in the city within the past hour, and the guardians of the institution had masked their anxiety with an indifference which their activity in making defensive arrangements contradicted. The patients saw in it a con-

firmation of the rumors which had circulated among them for days, and were impressed with an overpowering awe. The guards and keepers were still vigilant, but only with the more restless inmates. It was a happy moment for McDonell's attempt, and Sandy thought if his master had any thoughts in that direction this was his opportunity. He watched, therefore, with all his eyes, and stared through the twilight gloom of the corridor at the strip of light on the floor which marked his master's room.

The door opened at last, and Sandy, leaning eagerly forward, was agreeably disappointed to see only Andrews, handkerchief to nose and umbrella spread, come out and walk down the corridor. Fearful of another encounter with him, he withdrew from sight until the merry gentleman had passed and his steps had died away in the distance. There was a long interval of quiet. He heard McDonell moving about his room, as he was accustomed to do when preparing for rest, and seeing that there was no likelihood of any one passing at that hour, so engaged were the officials with their defences, he stole to the door and listened. McDonell was grunting! Sandy stood with ears preternaturally erect at this strange and unusual sound. McDonell grunted again! It was not a grunt of pain, but of fat, sensual satisfaction, and bore a strong resemblance to a sound which he had heard not seldom before. After a moment of indecision and alarm his mind was relieved by a sneeze from the individual within of so marked and well known a character that further doubt was out of the question. His face turned white with rage, and he pounded and kicked the door with a recklessness that appalled the merry gentleman within. Mr. Andrews made no attempt to admit him; hearty as was his contempt for

the valet, he was trembling with apprehension for his own safety. To be caught in the act of assisting a fellow-madman to escape from the asylum had too great terrors for him, and he was anxious only to make his escape to his own room as speedily as possible. Sandy, finding that it was lost time to remain where he was, rushed down the hall to Doctor Stirling's room. Trixy met him at the door and listened calmly to his excited explanation of McDonell's escape. She had a particular aversion for Sandy, and never failed to show it. On this occasion her manner was plainer than ever.

"Dr. Stirling shall know of it immediately," said she, closing the door in his face; and returning to the work which she had laid aside, she composedly ignored the valet and his message.

In the meantime, favored by his disguise and the darkness, McDonell proceeded along the hall with firm, unfaltering step and unconcerned manner. Now that he was in the midst of the danger, the old spirit and fire came back to him. He was cool; the nervousness of illness and confinement had vanished. His heart was filled with confidence and hope. He would be free in a few moments, and he nerved himself to pass through every difficulty and danger in order to obtain his liberty. At the end of the passage he threw aside his umbrella and handkerchief, and stood out in the light an entirely different man from the McDonell men were accustomed to see. His white hair had vanished, his white beard was gone. He had shaved off the one and dyed the other, and his costume was that of a gentleman of dandified and wealthy tastes. An eye-glass sat upon his nose and he carried a stylish cane. He wandered aimlessly through the halls until he ran against a keeper, who

stared at him suspiciously. The man had probably never seen him before.

"I beg your pardon," said McDonell, with the most approved drawl, "but really I believe I have missed my way. I was with Dr. Stirling a few minutes ago, and I am now unable to find the room."

"Come this way, sir," said the keeper, grinning broadly at a mishap of frequent occurrence with strangers. "It's a very easy thing to lose one's self in these big halls."

"I dare say."

And he was led up to the door of the Stirling apartments. He knocked and entered. Trixy, as he very well knew, was there alone. She came forward with a surprised air.

"I am sorry to disturb you," he said, "but having called on your father, and in leaving the office missed my way, would you be so kind as to send some one with me as far as the gate?"

He had no intention of deceiving Miss Stirling—indeed, he was sure that he could not; but he did not wish to bring the young lady into trouble on his account. Having already deceived two sharpers whose duty it was to have keen eyes, it would appear a correct and natural thing to have deceived Trixy. She had penetrated through his disguise at the first sound of his voice, and, with a woman's quick perception of the situation, she replied: "I shall be happy to show you to the door myself, and shall send a boy with you for the rest of the way." All which she did very unconcernedly, and in a short time McDonell stood in the road outside the asylum gates, a free man, with full twenty minutes the start of the spy Sandy. He bore his good fortune with as great equanimity as he had suffered his evil fortunes. His

first act was to thank God for so signal a favor. Then he hastened to find Juniper. He had directed that the man should meet him at a point a quarter of a mile distant from the asylum with a carriage, and there, in fact, he found him, but without the carriage.

“They are having fierce times in the city,” he explained—they could hear the uproar where they then were—“and I could not obtain a coach at any price. The people in this neighborhood are afraid to let anything go into the city. It will be hard work to reach the depot, sir, for the mob has seized the railroad buildings, and trains can go neither one way nor the other.”

“Annoying,” said McDonell thoughtfully; “had I foreseen that I might have furnished you with means sufficient to buy a carriage. Let it pass. Having obtained my freedom, I shall not complain of trifles. I have many hiding-places in the city. Let us go forward, in God’s name.”

The asylum being situated in the suburbs of the city, they had a mile of walking before them; but in the fictitious strength with which excitement had endowed him McDonell could have walked a dozen. It was a clear, starlit night. The wind was high, and the snow yet lay thickly on the ground. Juniper had no idea of the direction his new master intended to take. His fortunes were now linked with the fate of his benefactor, and he knew that from this fact they bore about them some desperation. Being a careless, irreflective youth unwilling to struggle against the stream, he was as content with the new position as he had been with the old.

“We must avoid the lower parts of the city, sir,” he said after a time. “It would not do to get into the mob. They would not spare us.”

"We shall be careful, Juniper," answered the master. They hurried along with swift and silent speed. The cheers and howlings of the rioters were every moment becoming clearer and more frightful to the ear. At one time they saw far down the street the glare of torches and the surging of the crowd, and an advance-guard of small boys flung stones at them. This compelled them to take a higher, safer, and less exciting thoroughfare. In due time they came to a handsome residence on Wilton Avenue. McDonell stopped at the entrance to the drive, and, leaning his head against the gate-post, burst into tears. It was his home. There his daughter lived, and he dared not cross its threshold or ask for the shelter, or the protection, or the alms which the poorest beggar in the world would there receive. He wept bitterly, and raising his hands heavenward—a habit misfortune had given him—he thanked God for His many mercies, and for this above all, that He had deemed him, the sinner, worthy to suffer in this way—to be homeless and wretched on a winter night and to know not where with safety he might lay his head.

Juniper recognized the place after a casual inspection, and was surprised to learn that the woman before whom he had been willing to perjure himself was the daughter of this man. A dim perception of how matters really stood in that unfortunate household entered his mind, and as McDonell seemed about to enter the gate he laid his hand on his arm. "I do not think it would be safe, sir," he said. "You cannot take any risks, and if your flight is discovered by the asylum officials there is no doubt but that this place will be visited first."

"I cannot help it," said the agonized man. "I must take one look at my home again. It may be my

last. Stay you here and watch. I know the ins and outs of the place and can easily avoid pursuers."

He went slowly up the gravelled walk, half cleared of the snow. His heart was really bowed with grief now, and his frame with weakness and suffering. The excitement of escape was gone. He was standing face to face again with his griefs. He went on until he reached the house. A light was burning in the drawing room, and one of the curtains was pushed aside. He stole up to the window. Ah! *she* was there, and with her the smiling Killany; and it tore his heart even while it pleased him to see how well and easily she carried her heavy burden of sin and wrong. She was fresh and sweet as if the current of her life had never known a storm, dressed with exquisite taste and richly, and towards Killany her manner was as distant and chilly as he had ever known it to be. There was no sign of emotion or of servility, and on the doctor's part there was the old smiling adulation and submissiveness. There was something more besides in his manner. It was threatening; she appeared to be getting angry, and Killany was getting frightened. How that delighted him! And he pressed his face closer to the window, and his eyes read every expression eagerly.

In the midst of the conversation she caught sight of his staring, death-like face pressed against the pane. Their eyes met for an instant—his fatherly, pitying, and hungry for the affection of the daughter who had spurned him, hers full of a slowly increasing horror. She closed her eyes only when she had fainted and slipped quietly to the floor, and he, waiting until he saw the doctor, after one quick glance around the room, proceed to restore her, fled again into the wretched night. A man was driving furiously up the

avenue even then, and he had a presentiment that it was the messenger with the news of his escape.

Juniper was at his post when he returned, and together they proceeded to the residence of Bishop Leonard, where McDonell was sure of a safe hiding-place. It had the misfortune of being in the heart of the city, and was surrounded at intervals by a mob anxious to burn it about his lordship's ears. A strong body of police and military daunted all attempts in that direction. The rioters were forced to content themselves with blockading the streets that led up to the residence.

"Which makes it improbable," Juniper said, in his endeavors to turn McDonell from his design, referring to this fact, "that we can reach Bishop Leonard's safely."

"It's my only refuge," McDonell answered sadly. "My own home is shut against me most of my friends would fear me, and here alone would I dare to trust myself for any length of time. We must steal or force our way through."

Juniper trembled with apprehension; but, with a devotion scarcely to be expected from so hare-brained and reckless a youth, he determined to remain with McDonell to the end. Indications of the nearness to the scene of the riots were fast increasing. The mob had been in this district, but had turned their attention to new fields of labor after destroying whatever was destructible. The streets were filled with débris: broken fences, trees, and windows showed everywhere. The inhabitants had either fled or buried themselves in the cellars. No light shone in the solitary streets, for the lamps had been destroyed, and here and there a fugitive, with a bandaged head, perhaps, stole fearfully along. The cries and cheers of the mob had not diminished, although the troops

and civil authorities were closing in fast on the rioters, and had limited their sphere of action to a considerable extent. Bands of soldiers went by occasionally, when Juniper drew his master into the protecting shadow of a building for fear of capture. They arrived at last in the critical neighborhood. As Juniper had said, every avenue was held by the rioters, and he who ventured to pass through might do so only with permission of the motley villains.

McDonell, silent and moody since his visit to his home, had not yet recovered the coolness and steadiness of manner which he had displayed earlier in the evening. His spirits rose as the necessity of a cautious advance became more imperative. The stronger but less intellectual man-servant was become dependent on him, and with this consciousness of old-time power he went on in his perilous journey. They chose a street which led to the back entrance of the Bishop's house. It was not so clogged with rioters as the others. Men stood on the corners and in the gutters, and on the verandas of deserted houses, planning, swearing, or binding up wounded heads and limbs. Nearly all the wounded were carried to this quarter; and as they were numerous, in spite of the insignificance of their hurts, it presented the appearance of an hospital. The intrusion of two respectably-dressed gentlemen among them was the signal for a gathering of the sound men of the party.

"Not so fast, lads," said a grimy youth with a large amount of orange-colored ribbon on his hat and a rusty sword dangling from his belt. "You don't pass this district without showing your reasons and your papers. This is not the night for any one who isn't a son of William to be abroad. Give an account of yourselves."

"None other than a son of William," answered the

merchant gravely, "would venture as we have. We know our own side, it is clear, or we would have come in with a few pieces of artillery, not to speak of the horse and foot. My good fellow," and with the word he slipped a gold-piece into his hand, "attend to your broken-headed men and let us pass on, for we have urgent business beyond."

"Go ahead, my hearties," said the youth, whose reasoning powers were somewhat obscured by unlimited whisky. "You're all right. Knock down the first man that objects, and if he wants references, send him to me."

They were accosted several times during their onward course by the scattered roughs, but the cool off-handedness of McDonell—for Juniper wisely said nothing—was sufficient to tide them over all difficulties. The barrier was passed, and they were on the point of obtaining comparative safety, when a sudden change in the scene of the riot caused a serious, and perhaps fatal, delay in their movements. The battle, which with varying success and at varying intervals had been carried on in the distant streets, suddenly made its appearance directly in their path. A disorderly crowd of roughs, pursued by a steady, well-managed, and well-drilled body of volunteers, suddenly rushed into the street. Juniper pulled the disappointed and unwilling McDonell into a protecting doorway, and endeavored to force an entrance into the house vainly. The mob having gathered in their vicinity and stopped to take counsel of the leaders, the two fugitives were soon discovered and dragged out into the midst of an angry crowd mad with the consciousness of defeat. McDonell's elegant and finical appearance drew the usual sarcasms from the unwashed upon their more fortunate brother.

"What have we here?" said he who held the position of leader.

"A sound and true man," answered the grimy youth from a veranda near—"One of ours. I let him pass, and I think you can do the same, captain."

"Are you a Papist?" asked the leader.

"No," answered Juniper truthfully. "We are not Orangemen, but not Papists either."

"I do not ask you to answer for this man. Are you a Papist or a Protestant?" said he to McDonell

"The soldiers, the soldiers!" came in a chorus from the mob around. "They are retreating! Down with the soldiers! Down with the croppies! Down with the priest!"

"Quick!" cried the leader—"Papist or Protestant?"

He had been standing with his eyes cast down, thoughtful and indifferent, and he looked up at the imperative words with the light of a new-born heroism shining in his face. His natural courage had not deserted him, and there was added to it the courage of his lately-awakened faith. All through his manhood he had denied his faith. The first test offered to him on his return to the fold was one of life and death, perhaps, and sure at least to bring him serious injury. Yet it seemed so necessary that for a little longer time he should live—there was so much to be done, so much to be made right that now was all wrong. The men around were silent from expectation. The glare of the torches gave a rugged picturesqueness to their hideousness, and brought out more clearly the elegance and refinement of the man who was their prisoner.

"Speak out," they cried, "and swear to it. Papist or Protestant?"

"I am a Papist," he said unhesitatingly, paying no heed to Juniper's looks of warning.

The mob seized on the words.

"A Papist," they roared, "and a spy! Down with him!"

The chief saw something pitiful or praiseworthy in the calm bearing of the man, and he would have interfered to save him; but with yellings and hootings the ruffians fell upon McDonell, beat him with clubs, trampled upon him, and kicked and crushed him as well as, in the press, they were able. Juniper, with a desperation born of pity and affection for his master, fought against the crowd like a lion, and had the consolation of seeing the chief by his side. They struggled and fought in vain. Two against so many were only making matters worse by their resistance, and McDonell was every moment approaching nearer to his ugly fate, when a figure on horseback, diminutive, but with a voice as shrill and piercing as the tones of a trumpet, came dashing into the heart of the multitude, scattering men right and left until he stood over the prostrate man and had cleared a space about him.

"Fools!" he cried authoritatively, and his voice was heard ringing along the street, "madmen! do you know what you are doing when you let the soldiers escape and beat the life out of a Scotchman, and one who is no Papist?"

McDonell caught the words even while losing consciousness. "I am a Papist," he muttered feebly.

"He says he is a Papist," growled one who stood near enough to catch the whispered words.

"You lie!" said Quip coolly. "This man is a madman. He escaped from the asylum to night, and back he must go again. You have not left much to

carry away, and the more shame to you for so using a Scotchman and a Protestant. Now follow the soldiers. They are men who will give you men's work to do. Away with you! They are retreating!"

"The soldiers! the soldiers!" roared the mob, catching the word with enthusiasm. In an instant they were pouring down the street in the direction taken by the volunteers, and over the unfortunate McDonell stood only Juniper and the strange horseman.

"Quip!" was all Juniper could say as the man dismounted.

"At your service," said the student, with a grin. "This man is well-nigh murdered. Where were you going?"

"Don't know," said Juniper shortly.

"To the Bishop's, it is likely. Very good; but he does not chance to be at home. I have a safe place for him, I fancy, and you will help me to carry him there."

"Not a step," said Juniper firmly. "He goes where I choose to bring him. You can get out. You have nothing to do with the man."

"There's gratitude for you. After saving his life, too. Juniper, my very dear friend, I think I know McDonell considerably better than you, and it is to friends I shall take him, and not to his enemies. It doesn't matter much one way or the other now, for the poor fellow will scarcely see the morning."

"Go ahead, then," said the appeased Juniper, "and look for deviltry if you attempt any of your usual tricks."

Placing the bleeding and senseless body of McDonell on the saddle, Quip rode away to the residence of the Fullertons.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MEMORABLE NIGHT—ITS SECOND PART.

Familiarity with crime and danger had developed Nano McDonell into a charmingly cool headed lady with a fine talent for intrigue and a great head for ca'culations. She had need just now of some qualities of the kind. Mrs. Strachan, with a gusto equalled only by the unselfishness which she ascribed to herself, had made Nano acquainted with the slanders concerning the Fullertons on that day which saw administered on Killany's person the deserved punishment of his baseness. Nano had heard it with indignation and shame. She recalled the night of the reception and Olivia's whispered anguish. The blow had been struck within the shelter of her walls, and the report had spread through the whole circle of fashionable society while she was in ignorance of its existence. Had Killany been so unfortunate as to have made his appearance at that moment a stormy scene might have taken place. The aggrieved lady was in the mood for acting upon impulse—an imprudence of which she was rarely guilty. Killany, however, being engaged in nursing his delicate and broken skin, did not show himself in public for some days.

In the meantime Miss McDonell had time to consider the situation and to reach wise conclusions. To a certain extent she was in Killany's power—not absolutely, not entirely helpless, for her own fearlessness had a counterbalancing effect. She had treated him so far only with condescension, and refused to

marry him. It would not do to drive him to desperation. The reward upon which he had counted so hopefully had been denied him, and to deprive him now of his office of trustee, as in her first anger she had contemplated, would be folly. He could do her serious harm, if he were so minded. She determined, therefore, to forbid him her house, and to have only such personal communication with him as was indispensable. This would be severe enough.

While awaiting his appearance her mind was filled with gloomy presentiments of evil. The air seemed heavy about her. Her daily amusements and work had lost their coloring, did not give her the pleasure she expected, and were at times insipid and tiresome. She was filled with the idea of fast approaching dangers. Ordinarily she expected them and awaited their coming cheerfully. She was prepared. It would be hard to move her from her position, and the consciousness of its strength had made her confident. The dangers seemed nearer, more portentous, more vague at this moment. She would not permit herself to dwell upon her gloomy thoughts. She could not endure sadness. Having at a high price purchased perpetual and unfading enjoyment, she felt that she ought to get the full worth of a bargain in which sadness was certainly not included. The feeling of deeper melancholy had been fastening upon her since that day when she had paid her last visit to Olivia. The distress of mind which the presence of that little lady then occasioned her made her undesirous of seeing her too often, and the chilliness of the visit was quite sufficient of itself to daunt her in the attempt. Nano reasoned with herself on the absurdity of her feelings, but found that logic cannot "minister to a mind diseased or pluck from the heart a rooted sorrow."

In despair and indifference she waited for her pre-sentiments to develop themselves into substantial facts.

In thinking, as she often did, on the incidents of the past few weeks and their probable or possible consequence, she was surprised yet not grieved to find that a new phase of feeling had appeared in her character. A feeling of hardness and bitterness and cynicism against her destiny and the persons concerned in it most was slowly enclosing her nature as in a network of steel. A strong sense of rebellion, akin to the sense of injustice, was roused when she thought of the revealing of her crime to the world or losing her estate, as if these acts were a wrong put upon her, and not the commonest justice to herself and to others. The peculiarity of the feeling was that it seemed to close her heart and her mind to every appeal of affection, interest, and reason, and in such a state she felt herself quite ready to kick against the goad pettishly and stubbornly, though it should be to her own sure and terrible destruction. This did not alarm her. She did not see then to what lengths it was able to lead her. It only pleased her that the natural softness of her disposition was gradually yielding to something more stern and useful in present circumstances.

Killany's first visit was made on the evening of McDonell's escape from the asylum. His first out-of-door appearance was made fittingly on this stormy night of riot and misrule. He was compelled to disguise himself partially and to make his way by the unfrequented streets; for the region of disorder lay directly in his path. She received him as she had of late been accustomed to receive him, in order to make his discomfiture more telling. His recent misadventure had

reached her ears, and she rejoiced that to it she could add another severe punishment—he had become so utterly contemptible in her eyes. His villainous nature she could have forgiven him, in so much as it was like her own; but the slanderer, the assassin, was too detestable a thing, and was to be got rid of at any hazard. It touched her to see that the man had really suffered from the bitter humiliation of his horsewhipping. His smile was a long time in getting itself together on his smooth face, and its first glimmering was sickly. The recollection of his shame looked out from every new face, and brought a dark, hateful shadow over his countenance. She respected him a trifle more, perhaps, for that display of human sensitiveness, but it did not alter her intentions in his regard. “For once, I believe,” he said in taking his seat, “I come without a business of any kind. The other trustees have managed affairs in my absence, and I do not exactly know our position. It is fortunate, is it not? It will be more pleasant for us when my office has lapsed, and we may take up old relations, talk philosophy and poetry, and renew the circle which has suffered so severely this winter.”

“I believe it does not matter much,” letting her eyes rest on his meaningfully. “The picture which you have drawn will never be put on canvas. I have decided that our meetings hereafter be strictly confined to business matters, and I must request now that your visits in future be made on that condition, and never without a previous warning.”

“You surprise me,” he answered, confused at her cool, matter-of-fact ways. “Are you quite certain of the extent of ground your request covers?”

“Quite, doctor. I have thought upon it for four days. In fact since your late difficulty—”

"I beg of you not to mention that, Nano. It is too painful."

He spoke low and passionately, and his face, paling, showed for an instant the traces of the whip on his cheek and forehead.

"Not so painful, not so disgraceful, as the act by which you deserved it so richly. You struck at a woman through a slander."

"Slander!" he angrily interrupted. "How do you know that it is a slander?"

"Because of the man who conceived and published it, and the manner he adopted. If you were certain of it you would not be content with a secret stab at your victims. It pleased you to choose for your scene of operations this house, and so have you dishonored it that after this night it must not know you again, unless under pressing necessity."

"You are not in earnest," he said, quite subdued, "or perhaps I do not understand."

"My meaning is clear enough, unless your late illness has affected your mind."

"As illness affected another's," he said maliciously.

"Having dishonored this house, it is closed against you. You will continue, I suppose, in your trusteeship. I shall not attempt to disturb you, but the oftener you do your business by deputy the more agreeable will it be to me."

"It is quite plain," he said slowly—"yes, quite plain. You dare not take me from that position. But you inflict upon me every wrong consistent with your own safety. Can you guess why I trumped up that charge against the Fullertons?"

"Virtue and innocence are your natural prey, perhaps."

"As age, and helplessness, and other people's gold

is yours," he answered savagely, stung into passion by her scorn. She laughed, partly in derision, partly from joy at finding the feeling of reckless indifference and obstinacy stealing over her. "I did it," he went on, "for your sake and because I loved you. If you had been swayed by the Fullertons you would not stand as you stand to day. You would be decidedly virtuous and decidedly poor. The house which you live in might not have been yours to close against me. I wished to destroy their influence at one blow and I have not failed. No," he added, smiling, "I have not failed, but my work is not yet complete."

"I am curious to know what lower depths you can reach."

"I love you, as I said, and I fear a rival. That rival was, and is, Dr. Fullerton. Perhaps you do not know that the man, poor and nameless though he be, presumes to love you."

"His presumption," said she, "is not more startling, and is far more acceptable, than yours."

"Well, you see I was right in fearing him. I had reason. I might have put him out of the way with cunning poisons, but with such things I never meddle. I let him live and destroyed his good name. Unfortunately, I destroyed myself, too."

"For him I have sympathy; for you, congratulation."

"Thank you. You will not congratulate me always. I shall not tell you how I am going to complete my work, for I have never yet threatened, and I shall not do so now. Indeed I shall not. But I ask you not to execute your purpose of turning me from your doors. My stay in the city is to be short and will be retired. Until I go I ask that you receive me here on the old footing."

“ You ask an impossibility.”

“ Yet I did them wrong for your sake. Is that no excuse?”

“ It is rather an aggravating circumstance, and you caused terrible suffering to my best friends.”

“ They are your friends no longer. You are drifting apart and will soon be as strangers.”

“ To you I owe this in part. I am not angry or overwhelmed. The loss of friends can be easily supplied.”

“ But not the loss of their good opinion. In this case it is sure to follow.”

“ I begin to see your drift,” she answered in tones of scorn. “ You will betray me to them. You justify every moment my opinion of your meanness. Even that misfortune cannot move me.”

He was silent from despair. Nothing that he could say seemed able to shake her resolution, and his desperation was rapidly depriving him of his self-command. He fixed his eyes on the floor in thought. She chanced to turn to the window. The shutters had been left open, and one of the curtains had been pushed aside. In the dark lines between, its outlines sharply and awfully traced on the outer darkness, was her father's face. His beard was gone, and his white hair, but she recognized the countenance on the instant. Its dark eyes were fixed on her pityingly, and a smile rested on the fixed, pallid face. She could not speak or move with horror, and a moment later, to Killany's astonishment, had fallen unconscious to the floor. He rushed to her side, after one swift glance around the room to find some cause for the phenomenon; but McDonell's face had vanished when his sharp eye fell on the window, and the sound of his retreating footsteps was drowned in the tramp of a horse's feet on the avenue. It did not take many

moments to restore the lady to her senses, and it was scarcely done when Quip came dashing into the room amid a shower of protestations from the servant who attended the door. Killany motioned for silence.

"Whatever information you have, keep it until I come to you," he whispered, and Quip at once withdrew.

Nano sat up of her own accord, and was herself immediately. She did not volunteer any explanations, and the doctor did not ask for them. He felt sure that Quip would be able to throw some light upon the matter, and, after a few inquiries and directions, started to leave the room, when she said curtly

"Do you believe in apparitions, doctor?"

"No," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"I saw one a few moments ago, and you have seen the effect it had on my nerves. I am sure that the person I saw is dead. Good night. You will remember my injunction."

She went off to her own rooms, assisted by her maid, very pale, but very composed. He sought Quip in the hall and heard of the escape of McDonell.

"He has been here," he said, "and must have passed you on the avenue. Take your horse and go direct to the bishop's house. If McDonell intends to remain in the city, that will be his refuge. When you have discovered his whereabouts come to me. If he escapes death to-night," he thought, "it will be a miracle. Well, my course is run at last, and it has ended badly. I believe my downward course has begun, and it began with that—that—"

He put his hands to his face in a passion, and the tears sprang into his eyes. The blows of the whip had penetrated to his soul. The scars were there forever, and the recollection was horrible.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MEMORABLE NIGHT—ITS THIRD PART.

The tumult prevailing in the city kept peace-loving citizens within doors that evening. In the darkness the rival factions recognized only two classes—friends and foes. Neutrality was out of the question ; and as broken heads were very evenly divided between these two classes, there was no safety in venturing abroad near the scene of combat. Sir Stanley Dashington was one of the few whom love of excitement and love of another description had drawn out into the streets. Being determined to spend the evening with Olivia and her brother though an insurrection barred the way, and not unwilling to be an eye-witness of the scenes enacting, he plunged boldly through the midst of the contestants, and came out on the other side laden with honors and victory, with his nose bleeding copiously and a cut over his left eye. In this state he presented himself before his friends. To see the alarm that spread over one pretty face at sight of his bloody countenance and disordered clothing was a sufficient reward to the baronet for what he had suffered ; and to have the little hands prepare the warm water, and sponge the wound, and bandage his head, and arrange and brush his clothing, was a bliss which made him willing and eager to rush into another fray. Only the doctor took the matter seriously, and grew sadder and envious at the mere sight of this fortunate lover attended by his mistress. It was then eleven o'clock, for the baronet had taken almost

two hours to make his way through the mob. He had strategized and fought with fists and sticks alternately. At one moment he found himself leading a furious crowd against the soldiers, and at the next he was running with useful speed to avoid the same. Ups and downs of fortune passed with the quickness of thought. Being brave, he was favored by fortune, and recorded with proper pride the number of heads he had probably broken and the number of vain attempts at his own.

In the midst of their rejoicing came Quip and Juniper with the senseless body of McDonell. A few words from the student were sufficient to explain matters, and then began "the hurryings to and fro, and gathering tears and tremblings of distress." The unconscious man was put to bed hastily, and carefully examined by the doctor. His body was badly cut and bruised but no bones were broken. His face had escaped injury. The cuts and bruises, though not in themselves absolutely fatal, were serious enough considering the feeble state of health in which McDonell was, to warrant the doctor's declaration that the man had but a few hours to live. Sir Stanley went at once for the bishop and Quip for another doctor, while Olivia, assisting her brother at times, drew from Juniper the details of the sad experience through which his master had gone. The little lady was all tears and sympathy and reverence for the dying man.

"He is nothing less than a martyr," she whispered to Harry. "He might have escaped uninjured, but he would not deny his religion to the mob."

And when no one was looking she fervently kissed her martyr's hand. He was a man of suffering, indeed, and to the watchers his face showed it plainly,

so pale was it, so weary, so full of pitiful longing as it for some escape from his difficulties. Waiting for the return of consciousness—for his heart was beating perceptibly and his breathing could be distinctly heard—Olivia smoothed his darkened and wrinkled forehead; and under her magnetic touch a new expression formed on the sad countenance. If his daughter but knew! The thought of Nano recalled the fact that no messenger had been sent to her. She mentioned it to her brother.

“As there is no other present,” he said, “send Juniper.” Which was accordingly done, and the brother and sister were left alone with the man who in the past had so cruelly wronged them. There were and could be no revengeful feelings towards the poor wretch, even had he not been sanctified by the dignity and reverence which surround a confessor of the faith. The mills of the gods, grinding slowly, had ground out to him from the fortune he had stolen only remorse, ingratitude, misery, and death, while those whom he had cheated, tried and proved by adversity, had been schooled to enjoy their good fortune in moderation when it should come to them. He came to consciousness before any of the messengers had returned.

“I am a papist,” were his first spoken words.

Then feeling Olivia’s soft touch on his face, and fancying that he was still in his old illness and that the past was but one of its hideous dreams, he murmured: “My daughter! Nano!” and reaching for the little hand, pressed it to his lips. When he saw her face and recognized her he knew it was not a dream, and the old expression of weariness and resignation returned to his face.

“Where am I?” he asked. “I was in the mob. And where is Juniper?”

"You are safe in the house of Dr. Fullerton," said Olivia, checking her own emotion, "and Mr. Juniper has gone for your daughter."

"My daughter!" he said suddenly. "Ah! yes, of course—my daughter."

The tone was significant, in spite of his feeble attempts to hide his feelings.

"You are kind," he said again. "You are Catholics, too. Have you sent for a priest?"

"Bishop Leonard himself will be here directly," answered the doctor, thinking it a good opportunity to come forward. "I must insist that you talk less, as you are in a dangerous condition."

A shiver passed through the wounded body, and his eyes, startled and wild, sought the speaker's face.

"I am dying," he gasped slowly; "and who are you that speak to me with the voice and mien of one who died long ago?"

"It is my brother," said Olivia—"Dr. Fullerton."

"Henry Hamilton," corrected the doctor, comprehending many things from McDonell's frightened manner and strange words, "the son of your dead friend."

The fear vanished from McDonell's face. He looked curiously and eagerly at the doctor.

"This is the providence of God," he murmured—"his justice and his mercy shown in the one act. I thought to die in the street and amid strangers without doing the work I had laid out for myself. Instead I die with the children of my wronged friend, and my one wish is to be accomplished. I know not upon what grounds you claim relationship with William Hamilton, sir, but your resemblance is sufficient. There is a silk bag about my neck; take it from me, Henry Hamilton, for your sister and yourself the

papers it holds were written. Use them as you will. They will help you to your own again. In all things, I pray you, be merciful to my daughter. You will find her wrong-doing faithfully recorded, but, where you can, be gentle with her."

"How could we be otherwise?" cried Olivia, with a burst of sobbing. "We have so loved her!"

"Have loved!" he sighed. "Alas! my child, so it will be with her in the future; to lose her best friends, and to lose them justly."

The doctor went into the outer apartment and thence into the garden to hide his agony and the groans that burst from his helpless lips. It was all true what Quip had said of her, and there was no hope for him. She was guilty of the horrible crime which had been laid to her charge. She had struck down her father, she had connived with a low villain to retain wealth which was not her own, and she could smile still and be gay under such a burden! Under the stars he fought out his battle, and when he entered again her false image had been torn to shreds from its resting-place over his heart and mingled with the rubbish of the garden.

Bishop Leonard, the new doctor, and Mr. Waring all came together in the wake of Mr. Quip and the baronet; but the important work had been done in their absence, and the dying man was left to the prelate and Olivia, while the others wandered about aimlessly pending the arrival of Miss McDonell. Juniper had accepted the appointment of messenger to Nano with alacrity. He had long been seeking an opportunity of approaching the lady whom he had helped to deceive. Circumstances had interfered. Once it was his hatred of Quip and the desire of revenge on that tormenting demon which prompted him

to reveal to Nano the share he had in deceiving her. Now there was a hazy notion in his not very astute mind that he would be doing the daughter of his benefactor a service. Their exact relations he but dimly understood. He knew that McDonell feared and loved his daughter, and he fancied that there was a connection between the causes of that fear and Killany's conspiracy against the truth. If his information would be of use in restoring father and daughter to each other, he would have done an honorable thing; and so he fled with eager and hasty steps through the night until he reached the residence visited by him earlier in the evening.

The servant who brought the announcement of his coming was stopped by Killany.

“Tell the gentleman that Miss McDonell receives no messages or visitors to-night.”

Juniper, hearing the words, came to the door of the waiting-room.

“Servant,” he said, “do as you are bid by your mistress. That man is not your master. Tell Miss McDonell that her father has escaped from the asylum and is dying at the house of a friend. I am come to conduct her to him. Tell her, too, I have that to say to her which will open her eyes to the kind of people she has been harboring of late.”

The doctor was livid, but saw fit to smile and bid the servant carry the message to his mistress, since it was so urgent.

“And so McDonell is dying?” said smoothly. “My good fellow, would you be so kind as to inform me where the gentleman lies? He is a very dear friend.”

“What is the information worth?” said Juniper, with a grin; for he, too, had heard of Killany's horse-whipping.

"Ten dollars," said the doctor, passing over the bill.

"He lies at a house occupied by one Dr. Fullerton," said Juniper, with a light and significant laugh. "You'll not be apt to go there."

The doctor staggered away as the servant came to take Juniper to his mistress's room. She was walking up and down as she had walked for the past two hours, pale, unwearied, despairing of she knew not what, her mind a blank, her heart a painful weight in her bosom. The news of her father's escape relieved her of the superstitious fear of the face at the window. That he was dying, with strangers, and perhaps by violence, roused all her dormant remorse and filled her from head to foot with a sharp agony, not so much from affection as from a fear of dark consequences. Juniper was awkward and nervous in so beautiful a presence, and silently waited to be questioned.

"You say that my father is dying," she said. "How has this happened, and where is he?"

"He was trying to get to the bishop's house, ma'am, and fell into the hands of the mob. He is now at Dr. Fullerton's, and the doctor says that he can't live longer than morning. I was sent for you."

She started and clasped her hands suddenly. Of all places in the world that he should be with Olivia and her brother!

"I have seen you before," she said. "You came here one time to do some work for Dr. Killany, did you not?"

"I did," answered the man impulsively, "and it was all a lie from beginning to end. I knew nothing about the children you spoke of, and the Hamiltons that I knew were living not long ago. Quip told me that Killany wanted any man or woman who could

swear to the death of any two children, and he took me ; and I know that Quip forged letters and newspaper slips to deceive you."

"Thank you," she said quietly. "We shall now go to the Fullertons." And she gave orders that the carriage should be brought round to the door. Her calmness was wonderful. The revelation of Juniper was a terrible shock to her pride, and she gave no sign. She seemed unable to feel any emotion. Tears would have been a relief, or complete exhaustion. She could obtain neither. She was in despair, ignorant of what to do against these rising dangers and deceits, and she thought her helplessness composure. Going down the stairs, she met the man who had tricked her so cleverly, who had been her smiling Mephistopheles, persuading her of obtaining a happiness she was never to know. The sight of him could not drive her into a fury. He attempted to speak to her, but she waved him away and called two of the men-servants.

"This gentleman," she said, pointing to Killany, "will now leave the house. Should he enter it again at any time without my special permission, you will turn him forcibly out of doors."

She had the satisfaction of seeing him wince at that. If troubles were rising around her like an incoming tide, insults and the bitterest humiliations met her tempter everywhere. He began in his delicate way to bluster.

"Away with him!" said the lady to her servants. Before he was exactly aware of the situation the doctor found himself hurrying down the snowy pathway to the gate, guided by the strong hands of the men-servants. Fate was against him, and yet he remained unconquered, holding with the tenacity of a bull-dog to his prey.

As Nano and Juniper proceeded to Fullerton's she had opportunity to make inquiries concerning the events of the night. Nothing which she heard was reassuring. The darkness seemed gathering about her in earnest, and with it came the new feeling of reckless obstinacy which had so lately made its appearance. She remembered that at first it had pleased her. It intoxicated her now with the idea that if her destiny was really awaiting her she would ride to it sphinx-like and know no shame or regret. Still the prospect was not encouraging. To the serious observer distance lends to oblivion and death no enchantment, and for her they possessed the same characteristics of terror, pain, and humiliation.

The house was reached at last, and the baronet came out to help her from the carriage. He who would once have loved to do that office and would have envied him to whom it fell, was determined never to touch her hand or look on her face again. In the eyes of those men gathered in the room where her father lay she was a guilty and pitiable thing, and though they strove to hide their real feeling toward her, she felt it by her own strong sensitiveness. Quip was gazing at her curiously, as he would gaze at a noted criminal, and Mr. Waring, grief-stricken at his master's fate, fixed his old eyes on her with an expression of hideous decrepit horror. The baronet was courteous, the bishop subdued, and Olivia, timid and frightened because of her knowledge, did not dare to raise her head.

He for whom she looked most eagerly was absent, and at that hour it had a meaning. On all sides she was condemned, even by those she loved. On all sides she was pitied, even by those she despised, and whose pity was an insult. An heiress, a beauty, a

genius, and a criminal!—these were her glories, and, high as some of them lifted her, the last one cast her down into the depths. Her pride and stoicism was a poor armor against the arrows which human eyes could shoot. In its stead came that feeling which pride had given birth. It answered her purpose fully, and she prepared herself against any display of natural emotion.

He had been waiting for her with hopeful patience after the last preparations for his long journey were made. His contrition was a wonderful and pathetic thing to see. It had risen out of great suffering. He had atoned as much as a man could atone unaided for the sin of his life. His ill-gotten property was restored to its owners; for the long-continued denial of his faith he had atoned with his life; for his other neglects his illness and imprisonment were large compensation; and there now remained only his daughter. How he prayed that his petitions for her might be granted; that new suffering of his might purchase for her faith and penitence! She came in where he was lying, and, the door being closed, they were left alone. She took a seat by the bedside calmly, and gazed composedly but with an inward feeling of dread on his death-marked face.

“Well,” he said, “we have met again.”

“We have met again, father,” she replied. “They tell me for the last time.”

“For the last time in this world, Nano. There will be one o’her meeting, a more sorrowful and terrible one, before our God. I am very happy—I have so strong a hope that heaven has room for me. I wish to die with my bad deeds as far as possible undone. I have restored my property to the actual living heirs. I would die content, Nano, if I had but

the assurance that we may meet again in heaven. My child, of all the wickednesses I have been guilty of, that was the worst which took my fatherly care and love from you and bestowed it on my gold. You might have been such a woman as this Olivia Fullerton."

"I am what I have been made. I cannot change. I shall die even as I have lived," she said, with a fierce, burning hate in her heart for him that he had left her so utterly to the mercy of strangers. It almost, in her own mind, justified her cruelty towards him.

"With God all things are possible," he answered meekly; "and I shall pray that you may be saved. Nano, it is my dying sorrow that I leave you in so wretched a state."

"I regret that I should be a cause of sorrow to you in this hour. It may please you to know that I have dismissed Killany."

"God forgive him!" he said fervently. "If he had found you and me stronger in virtue he would not have had opportunities to succeed so well in his wicked designs."

There was silence then between them until she thought of the heirs.

"You say you have found those children, and have taken means to restore to them their property. I shall be happy to give them their own. Killany deceived me into the belief that they were dead, and until to-night I was ignorant of the deception. I would not have acted so harshly had I known it at first."

"Poor, poor child!" said the dying man. "He deceived and tricked us both. These children have grown to be man and woman. Nano, you are in

their house. They are Dr. Fullerton and his sister, and I find that they can prove their rights clearly."

The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they had ground, in the present instance, exceedingly small. This woman, who had passed through the ordeal of the last two months with a marvellous ease and composure, and had sat unmoved by the bedside of her dying father; who had seen her friends depart, and her servant turned traitor and cheat, without giving a sign of grief, heard this revelation with as much apparent indifference as on similar occasions. But there are limits to human endurance, and hers had been reached. She was composed as one could be who has been struck dead in a sitting posture. All her faculties were numbed. Something seemed to have dashed like a bullet into her brain and stopped the machinery. A minute after the words had been uttered she lay on, the floor unconscious, and in a swoon so terrible that it looked like death to the astonished people who rushed into the room. It had its effect on McDonell. Paralysis seized immediately upon his enfeebled limbs, and even while they were bearing his daughter from his presence the worn soul, all its light centred in the eyes so mournfully fastened on her still form, fled on its eternal mission.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TO THE LOWEST DEPTHS.

Mental or physical pain, if not too acute, is long in reaching a culminating point. It continues while endurance lasts, and when that fails pain is dead. Misery can heap itself to an astonishing height, and find mortals to bear the burden even while putting on the straw that breaks the supporter down. Miss Mc-

Donell had come to the conclusion that her sufferings, her real miseries, had begun and ended with the one fatal announcement which her father had made on his death-bed. She did not discuss her wretchedness. The fact was too patent. Whatever hopes she had before entertained of reaching once more the eminence of virtue by an irreproachable life died out. The strongest motive was gone from her. Poverty, loneliness, oblivion would have been welcomed could they have restored to her the friends she had lost. Her wealth was become distasteful, even hateful. It had cost her the esteem of a noble woman and the love of one man—the only man in her world, and who had gone out of it for ever.

It was April, and April rains were falling on the dead leaves of the previous autumn. The leaden skies and the desolate streets, the grand, lonely house with its death-odors, the skeleton trees naked and dripping, were in perfect accordance with the mood which possessed her. A curtain of dismal colors had fallen between the mirth of the winter and the promised gayeties of the spring, and a similar curtain had fallen between the glory and joy of her past life and the utter misery to come. Her trust in herself was gone. She played now the rôle of the unsuccessful schemer, cheated by those whom she had thought faithful, cheated by herself when she dreamed of purchasing at a bargain. She had become a laugher and a scorner. What little faith she had in personal good was lost. She sneered at her loved transcendentalism, and threw her books into the flames. Having innocently broken her most favored idols, she revenged herself by breaking the less favored ones in succession.

Her father had been scarcely laid in his grave with fitting honors when she sent for Killany. Caprice

had more to do with the action than sound sense or discretion. She was inclined to do rash and desperate things. He had once been ignominiously ejected from her house, and threatened with a similar service should he venture to make his appearance there again without permission. This he had felt as no disgrace, neither as an annoyance until by the death of Mc-Donell his trusteeship lapsed. Then a footing at Mc-Donell House would have been a wonderful advantage. His honor was expediency. He received her summons with gratitude, and came, smiling and subservient, at her command. He was met with superciliousness. She had some torpedoes to set off for his benefit. Their effect had already been tried on herself, and she was desirous of noting in her cynical way their effect on the arch schemer, who was never taken aback at anything.

“My father in dying,” said she, when the conversation was fairly begun, “managed to leave the property we so struggled to hold to the heirs of the estate. I was puzzled to know how he could do that when you so successfully proved the heirs dead.”

This was the first of the missiles she had prepared, and it went off with considerable noise. He blushed at her nice innuendo, and stammered out that he was as much surprised as herself.

“A lawyer of these heirs has told me that I may as well compromise. I have not a chance in the courts, and ugly stories might get out among my city friends. Dr. Hamilton and his sister Olivia—lately Dr. and Miss Fullerton—have kindly consented to any arrangements I shall propose in the matter. They are the heirs.” The second missile was more successful even than the first, as it rendered the doctor quite speechless. He wished, with a great comprehensive-

ness, to call himself a fool, but the word was altogether too weak to express his appreciation of himself. Miss McDonell, perceiving the feeling, was delighted.

“They have given me my own time in which to make my arrangements,” she continued. “You are no longer my trustee. I now make you my agent. The sum of three hundred thousand dollars must be placed at the disposal of the Hamiltons as speedily as possible. It will therefore be necessary to dispose of real estate, bonds, mortgages, and merchandise to that amount. You are commissioned to do this, and you will also convert into money whatever property is left to me.”

“Which will amount to one hundred and fifty thousand,” he said, quite overcome by the unexpected mark of favor, but conjecturing that it came from disappointment and grief at the personality of the heirs.

“Very good. You may go, and when you have business to transact send a deputy. I do not care to see you oftener than can be helped. Thirty thousand of my property is yours. You have already by your negligence cost me more, but I let that pass. Without any questions or thanks or explanations, go.”

He went with wise alacrity. Her smiling, decisive manner was too much for him.

“Generous with her money,” he thought. “However, I am not sure that her generosity will stand the strain that I shall put upon it.”

A remark which shows that Miss McDonell’s cynical, brave, devil-may-care recklessness in appointing such a villain as her agent was not without something of foolishness in it after all. Perhaps she thought to bribe him into faithfulness by her gift of thirty thousand.

Real estate was then at a premium, and particularly that which had been owned by McDonell. His investments had been well made, and the mortgages, bonds, etc., were sold at full value. Her share in the business which her father had carried on was sold to the junior partners, and in two weeks the sum of three hundred thousand dollars was placed to the account of Dr. Hamilton and his sister. Killany announced by deputy that in ten days the remaining property would be represented by a bank account of over one hundred thousand dollars. His deputy was the agreeable Quip, whose share in certain transactions had not yet become known to his over-confident master. Mr. Quip called every other day with his report, and was to call until the doctor had finished his work.

The Hamiltons in the meantime had made their appearance in society under the protection of their new name, their new fortune, and the powerful Mrs. Strachan. Their confidence in themselves and their indifference to every one, now that they could stand face to face with the world, upset the slander which Killany's public whipping had already brought into question; the fact that brother and sister were to share some sixty thousand pounds between them made general society affable, though not cringing; and Mrs. Strachan capped the climax gloriously. Society came to its knees after a while, threw dirt at Killany, and begged pardon in the many delicate but open ways which it employs for that purpose. Having a great respect for it, with a safe amount of scorn intermingled, Dr. Hamilton and Olivia chose to forgive and forget past cruelties.

With the end of April the marriage music began to melt on the air in delicate cadences. Olivia declared

that she was in no hurry, which Sir Stanley refused to believe, and he reasoned with her in a variety of ways. He argued that the little birds were mating in the spring weather, and no time could be more appropriate for them. He had been dallying so long on the American continent, not having been home since he had come into his inheritance, that the charge of absenteeism would soon be flung at his head. Heaven alone knew what wrongs his tenants might be suffering from his absence. For a longer delay she might hold herself responsible. It was the proper thing for a hero and heroine when their troubles were over to go to the church at once and get married. Those novels in which the reader is told that the lovers *intend* to get married were not satisfactory, and authors risked a good part of their reputation by prolonging useless dalliance through three chapters when lovers should have become man and wife and turned their attention to more serious duties and more rational pleasures.

"Oh!" said she pettishly, for prosperity had spoiled her a little, "hen you don't believe in the cooing and the wooing that ought to precede these things"

"Don't I?" says he, with a grin of delighted recollection at his own doings in that direction. "You minx! haven't I cooed and wooed for a whole winter like a young dove? And haven't I liked it, and haven't you liked it so well that you have consented to listen to it for the rest of your days. And didn't I get a bloody nose and a broken head one night in order to satisfy your—my tastes for the thing? And am I not about to fight a duel with a man on your account, unless the said man, who has twice abjectly petitioned for an extension of time, shall leave the city immediately?"

"Oh!" hiding her blushes with her hands, "how absurdly you can talk. Fight a duel just when you are going to get married!"

"It gives a relish to the wedding, my love," says he. "You have just got your money"—coaxingly—"and will you not say next week for the time? Come, think how I have waited and suffered, think how I am pressed for time. If you will consent I will do more cooing and wooing in one week—"

"I don't want it," says she curtly. "What are you thinking of? A week! You take away my breath at the bare idea!"

"Then you will not say next week?" And he began to bridle.

"Why, you dear, unreasonable fellow, who ever heard of a young lady just come into a fortune getting married without a trousseau?"

"Trousseau!" echoes the baronet in despair. "A letter to Paris, a month or two of waiting, and heaven knows what besides! I'll not stand it. I sha'n't wait longer than another week. Why did you not think of this a month ago?"

"Heated about nothing, Sir Stanley. I can get ready in a week; but then you know this is to be a grand affair, and one needs at least two weeks—"

"Stop right there," says Sir Stanley. "In two weeks it shall be, and if you change your mind I start for Europe to-morrow."

It was settled afterwards in family council that the wedding should take place early in the month of May now close at hand, and preparations were begun on a great scale. Olivia and her baronet would much have preferred a quiet, unostentatious ceremony, but Mrs. Strachan, having been consulted, went against it so decidedly, and gave reasons so strong in support of

her views, that all agreed she was right and consented to follow her instructions. Society must know once and for ever that Miss Hamilton was not afraid of scrutiny into her family records; that she stood before the world a lady of fortune, and not one whit less equal to her husband before than after her marriage. As her wealth was considerable, it would not be amiss to give society an idea of its proportions in the magnificence of her last appearance as Miss Hamilton. The ceremony was to be performed at the cathedral, and the breakfast was to take place at Mrs. Strachan's residence.

It came off at the appointed time, and was, of course, a grand affair. All the city was present. Every fashion of the hour was represented in the costumes of the ladies and gentlemen, and the bride, as the centre of attraction, looked the perfection of the character which she sustained. It was a triumphant hour for Sir Stanley, but a rather mournful one for Lady Dashington. That day saw her go out once more into a strange world. She had once thought that no other parting could be more sorrowful than that which she had made with her loved convent and convent life. It bore only a shadow of present suffering. "For ever and for ever" were the words traced on her destiny. She was to find a new soil, and a new home, and new friends, and all the dear old associations were to be torn from her and thrown aside. One face that should have smiled and wept with her in that hour was not present. A card of invitation had been sent to Miss Mc-Donell, and with it Olivia had sent an entreating note, affectionate as ever when the chilliness of the past was allowed for. The invitation was declined with thanks, and the note remained unanswered.

The breakfast, being under Mrs. Strachan's supervision, was a success. The bridegroom was in a merry mood between looking too often at his bride and at the bottom of his wine-glass. In his speech he said many rash brilliant things and many rash foolish ones, which were quite excusable in a man just married, but afforded Lady Dashington ample material for a first curtain-lecture. Dr. Hamilton had been very cheerful and talkative through the whole ceremony. It was a satisfactory event for him, inasmuch as it saw his sister so well provided for. Olivia had watched him closely, but was unable to detect any outward expression of the sorrow which she knew to be eating up his heart.

At last the ordeal was over for the married pair, and, after many tearful adieus, they were carried away to the station. Olivia bore it very well, although she looked a trifle frightened, as if the magnitude of her position had not yet been fully understood. She hung about her brother, and would not take her eyes from him even while the train was steaming into the depot.

"Keep a brave heart, little girl," he said consolingly, "and have no fears for me. Such a steady old chap, with plenty of money at his command and a loved profession, can never want for happiness."

"Ah!" she answered tearfully, "you will be alone. If the wish of your heart could but be accomplished this parting would not be so bitter for you and me. You have always had the suffering, Harry, and I the pleasure. Even now it is the same. Isn't it possible, Harry, that she and you—"

He put his hand over her mouth with a gentle shake of the bowed head.

"Never, never, Olivia. It can never be. I love

her still, it is true, but my respect for her is gone. I do not condemn her. We can leave that to God."

He led her to the train and stood waving his handkerchief at the tearful face as it moved away. It was the last of pretty, pure hearted Olivia. Very downcast he felt as he returned to the guests at Mrs. Strachan's and took his place among them. He was resolved that as soon as possible he would leave the city and seek forgetfulness and peace amid new scenes.

Having obtained the property so confidently assured him by Mr. Quip, his first duty was to hunt up that individual, in order to pay him his stipulated five thousand. Mr. Quip, however, was not to be found, neither at the office, which was closed, nor at any of his usual haunts in the city. Strict inquiry brought out the fact that the gentleman was in jail, and thither went the doctor, amused at this new freak of Mr. Quip's fortunes. The philosopher greeted him cheerily and gabbled away with unconscious coolness.

"All through our friend Mr. Juniper," he said in explaining the circumstances of his imprisonment. "Miss McDonell presented him with some money for his devotion to her father - he knew that would be forthcoming, the rascal!—and on the strength of my five thousand I asked him to lend me some. I have a habit of borrowing, I must admit, and had practised considerably on Juniper. He refused, and, going off with some old cronies, returned to my lodgings in the evening gloriously drunk. I put him to bed unthinkingly, and two hours later find myself in jail on a charge of robbery preferred by Juniper. He had no money when he woke up next morning, and found it convenient, having been under my care, to fix the charge on me. Unfortunately the

judge saw the matter in the strong light which Juniper's counsel and the prosecuting crown attorney threw upon it, and I am rusticated for two months straight. You may put away my five thousand dollars in a bank. There is another thing which has made me uneasy, and which I wish you to settle. Killany has fled to parts unknown. I was his go-between with Miss McDonell for some time, because he was her agent and she would not look at him. When he was going he gave me a series of letters to be delivered to her one by one every other day for two weeks, exactly as if he were present in the city. He has been gone ten days, and the whole affair has made me uneasy. I can swear that he did not go without taking a fair share of somebody's goods along with him, for he had none of his own."

Dr. Hamilton thanked Mr. Quip for his information, bade him final adieu, and hastened to alarm the bishop. Inquiries were set on foot by both, and the result chronicled a new and last misfortune for Miss McDonell. She was left as poor as the poorest. The house had been sold from over her head by the smiling Killany, and with his ill gotten gains that slippery gentleman had fled to distant countries where he would be unheard of by his Canadian friends for evermore. She bore her losses with the same stoicism shown under the trials of the months that were past.

"I am not in love with riches and station now," she said to the bishop, "and feel some relief in knowing that the metal which brought me so much evil is no longer mine. I am going to New York. I have a position already assured me as editress of a magazine, and the salary is quite sufficient to support me in comfort. If I desired to be revenged on Killany I could not have done better than to have permitted

him to make away with this money. He is now the beggar on horseback, and you can surmise the direction he will take."

Nevertheless the priest was not pleased with her manner or her looks or her decision. Her face had of late become marble in its whiteness, and the lustrous eyes never for a moment lost their expression of pain. The strain which she had borne without once wincing was too severe for her physical powers long to withstand, and he suggested that she should remain for some time at leisure before attempting work of any kind.

"I am not safe without work," she replied, "and I am sure that new scenes and new faces, and the excitement of being poor and earning my living, will be of benefit. All my old pursuits are distasteful. I could not remain here in any event. I shall go within a week. I have many friends in New York, who are acquainted by this with my changed fortunes and are anxious to serve me. If I get ill—and, to tell the truth, I am not desirous of it—there will be many kind friends to care for me. Good-by, my lord. Be assured of my gratitude for your many kindnesses."

Within a week she had departed, alone and unattended, for New York. It was the wonder of society for the proverbial nine days. Dr. Hamilton had preceded her by one day; Killany was said to be in Italy; Quip was in jail; Juniper, haunted in his drunken moments by visions of the long wharf and a woman's face, had fled to the West; and Olivia with her husband was safely settled in Ireland. Thus one by one the characters of our tale faded from the scene where they had played with so much pathos, merriment and pain, and left behind them no deeper impression on

the hearts or memories of men than the snow which had gone in the spring. Their places were fil'ed as rapidly as they were vacated. It is our misfortune and our safety that, important as we may be to our little selves, with the world we are of no importance.

CHAPTER XXX.

LOVE AND DEATH.

In logic certain premises being laid down, their conclusion is inevitable. In the lives of individuals certain circumstances being given and certain dispositions of a man's character, results are looked for as a logical conclusion. Wonders are not uncommon in the nineteenth century, but miracles are—such a miracle, for instance, as the conversion of a dying brigand. It would be a miracle to upset the logical outcome of certain reasonings. We have laid down premises in the life of Miss McDonell which predict and justify mournful conclusions. She was a woman of talent, beauty, and gentle manners, of intellectual pride, and of inordinate personal pride. Her education and training had been at the same time excellent and vicious—excellent in its methods, but vicious from the want of a proper selection of studies. These had no real worth. They were all show. The soul received no athletic training. Its temptations were all unstudied, unknown, and unprovided for; and we have seen how easily this proud, irreproachable woman fell in spite of the pretty, artificial bulwarks which her education had taught her to look upon as impregnable. By her dalliance with sin she had lost many important things: the friend she prized most in the world, and who was deserving indeed of a higher

and better love than she could give ; the affection of a man too noble in body and soul to take to wife a woman so stained as she ; the wealth which was not hers, but might have been ; and the respectable sum remaining to her in her own right.

She had lost yet more important things. Her experience with temptation had taught her the true character of her religion of humanity, the value of the principle of beauty as a test of good and evil in the world, and the precise amount of good to be realized from the propagation of culture when unsupported by the sterner and more general principles of religion. She threw her disciples, her heroes, and her books overboard along with her faith, and became the most dangerous and cynical of its enemies. Her situation was not bettered. Catholicity had not been her bugbear always, and now that the principles which had once given it a beauty in her eyes, and the one man and one woman who had made its beauty something more than pure speculation, were gone, she never gave it a moment's thought. Her mother's faith she despised for its hollowness and its divisions. There was nothing left for her but to sail on without any definite belief save a belief of negations, carping as she went at every one who held an opinion as to the eternal destiny of man, and sneering at those who, like herself, had no opinions or had done with them. One thing she had retained from the ruins of her intellectual life —her morbid fear of death. She was sincerely in earnest when she told the bishop that she did not wish to be ill. Yet she feared illness daily, trembled at the slightest scratch or ache, and read everything of a mortuary character that came in her way. She knew death in all its aspects, and sighed to think she could

not meet it with the resignation of a Christian, or the stoicism of a pagan philosopher, or the utter indifference of ignorance. Death was the only thought which could throw deep and settled gloom over her ordinary cheerfulness.

When she went to New York she secured a pretty five-roomed cottage on Long Island with a garden and a fine water-view. She was determined not to be ill, never to think of or regret the past, but to live in the living present, to have cheerful friends and cheerful work, and to care for that precious life which the simplest accident might take from her. It was easy for her to do all this. Her beauty, her talent, and her kind nature soon made her popular and dear to many. The cottage on Long Island was never without its visitor, her coming was always welcomed in literary and fashionable circles, and she reigned there a truer queen than she had reigned at home. Outdoor exercise was everything with her. Her walking, riding, rowing, gardening were constant. Her editorial work, though delicate, was light. Her thoughts, though tinged with a sombre hue, were cheerful enough. The greater sufferings absorbed the lesser. So long as illness and death remained away from her door she could be happy.

Still, she was not in good health, as anxious friends whispered among themselves. No exercise could bring back the old glow to her cheeks. Her face was marble still, and if her appetite was good her sleep was capricious and troubled. Her disordered fancy made matters worse, perhaps. When the cloudy fall weather began to appear she was showing evident signs of breaking down. In truth her excessive pallor indicated clearly enough to the practised eye the presence of organic disease. Miss McDonell's will had

been much too strong for her more delicate body, and the forced equanimity which the will had compelled the body to maintain had been carried too far for safety. Violent emotion would have been a relief. She suffered it often, but would never give it expression, and the pent volcano cracked the sides of its crater. She dreaded to consult a doctor, so fearful was she of an adverse opinion, and day after day she put off the duty in the hope of ultimate recovery, until the disease which had first wounded and finally destroyed her father had come upon her like a lightning stroke.

She retired one night wretched, despondent and ill. At midnight she awoke with sharp, needle-like pains extending down one side from her head to her foot. They were not troublesome, and she would not disturb the servant, hoping to see the attack shortly pass away. Her sleep was uneasy for a long time, but towards morning she fell into a heavy, lethargic slumber, so heavy and painful that she felt as if she could never wish to be stirred from her bed. As in a dream she saw the sun steal in across the floor, and heard the servant making preparations for the breakfast; heard the little bell that announced its readiness, and smiled to think of the servant's astonishment when the punctual mistress did not make her appearance. Then came the footstep on the stair, the knock at the door, which she was too indifferent to answer, the gentle inquiry as to her delay, and then the opening of the door. She smiled again at the thought of the surprised look on the girl's face, but her dreamy delight was broken in upon rudely by a scream of terror, as the servant rushed to the bed, and, falling on her knees there, cried out, tearful and frightened:

“O Miss Nano! what is the matter? what has happened?”

"Matter! Happened!" said the mistress, or rather tried to say it, for the words mumbled in her mouth, and she had some difficulty in moving her lips at all. In an instant she was awake—oh! so wide and painfully awake—and moan after moan burst from her as the awful truth was realized that on one side she was entirely paralyzed.

Her fate had come to her at last. Death was standing at her door in the same hideous shape it had assumed for her father, and beckoned her into the dreaded rottenness and oblivion of the grave. People wondered at the fear and agony which the impressive woman showed at the supreme moment. Her life had been so gentle and kind, even though so brief, she had been so positive as to her own convictions, that they who would gladly have accepted oblivion in fear of the wrath to come could not understand the fear she had for death. The doctors came and kindly told her the worst. There was no hope for her. A second shock would come to deprive her of the use of her uninjured limbs, and then speedy death. The worst being known, she became tranquil and resigned herself to the inevitable in mute despair. It was very terrible! Alone and helpless, and how changed from the bright, honorable, powerful lady of a few months past! Wrecked in mid-ocean, seeing barks less fair, less fortunate, and more careless go on in homely serenity to the haven, while she, so full of promise and so beautiful, foundered by the way! Her thoughts were mournful enough and bitter as death could make them, and the more painful because she knew that, according to her own belief, they would soon meet with an eternal ending.

It had pleased the divine wisdom to leave many fervent and loving prayers unanswered in her regard.

We cannot search into the workings of the infinite mind of God. We can only accept the facts. She was dying as she had lived, a sceptic, and, as she said to a friend, the nearer she came to the goal the more impossible and ridiculous seemed the Christian eternity. Her opinions might have changed when utter helplessness seized her, and she could only hear and see and make no sign. If they did no one knew. In her greatest misery one gleam of happiness shot out from the darkness of her cloud. Dr. Hamilton, hearing she was at the point of death, came to see her. He was a man whom she had deeply wronged, and, though unintentional in his regard, her sin was none the less heinous. She would have endured anything rather than have injured him or Olivia, for she had loved him. He had loved her, she knew, and he had thrown her aside justly for her crimes. No word or look of love had ever passed between them, but in this solemn hour there was no masking of hearts. She could make no expression, and he was apparently cold. He had a letter from Olivia unopened for her, and asked if he should read it. By a moan she signified that he should not; but when he would have put it away she moaned again, and then, after much doubt and effort to understand, he put it on her breast and she was content.

He was anxious, as others had been, that she should not die utterly without hope, and he spoke to her with that thrill in his voice which only the lover possesses. For he was her lover still, loving her all the more that her sins were so soon to be hidden in death; and he ventured to tell her then of his unchanged affection, and how once he had hoped to have made her his own, and to have taught her the sublime truths of the great faith, and at least to have

led her into that belief which all mankind, from the savage to the sage, had in all ages shared—belief in God. He asked her at the last if she would not accept that primitive article of faith, and pray in her heart for mercy and safety in whatever should happen to her after death. To his great joy she answered in the affirmative. He remained with her to the end, for she could not endure to have him away from her side ; and just before the sleep of death rested on her tired eyelids he knelt down and in a touching prayer recommended her to the God whom at the eleventh hour she so imperfectly recognized. In her way she signified amen, and one last flash of the light and glory of the mind within lit up her beautiful eyes as the lover pressed his kiss of love, pity, and forgiveness on her face—his first and last. He had scarcely taken away his lips when she was dead.

Poor Nano ! What a life and what a death ! We can at least say, " Have mercy on her, God," as Dr. Hamilton did, and hope that to the eye of God things may have been visible in her heart which found her favor with Him, unseen as they were by those who stood about her dying-bed. She was beautiful and unfortunate, and our pity and charity will forget everything else in her life. She suffered much, and that may have been a great atonement coupled with her dying act of faith. We know that the mercy of God reaches far out towards the suffering.

THE END.

